THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY

Rev. E. HASTINGS, M.A.

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THE PASTORAL EPISTLES
THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

INTRODUCTION

I

The Title

The title 'Pastoral' is applied to three of the New Testament Epistles—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. They are distinctive enough in content and purpose to be put in a group by themselves. The title they bear is justified by their directly 'practical' character. In them we have Pauline counsels to two active servants of the gospel who occupy a place of influence in the ministrations of the Church. These counsels deal with ideals and objectives that belong to rule and order in the Christian fellowship, and with the witness that Christian character should give in the contacts of community life.

The Pastorals seek to 'apply' Christianity in definite circumstances that are confronting the growth and struggle of the Church of that day. In this sense their title is appropriate and defines them positively enough. For the modern mind the title carries a more detailed connotation than it has here. Much that is of importance for organization, worship, and spiritual direction of believers is absent. The Epistles are brief, and they remain personal rather than ecclesiastical documents.

II

Authorship

The traditional view, for which the Pastoral Epistles as they stand are directly Pauline letters, has appeared to modern critical investigation to rest on insecure foundations. There is now a large consensus of opinion that a different account of their origin and nature is required. For the purpose of this Introduction it will not be necessary to deal in any detail with this revision of the traditional account. But a summary statement upon some of the factors in the critical judgment will be appropriate. In their present form the Pastorals must be regarded as composite in character. There is evidence to justify the view that they do not date from St Paul's day. The explanation offered is that they derive from a writer who looks back with admiration to the Apostle's life and teaching. He is a devoted 'Paulinist' who feels that the need of the Christian community of his day is to rediscover the relevance of the Pauline faith and doctrine for the practical necessities of order and discipline. There is a 'deposit' of faith and it has to be 'kept' more realistically in the activity of living. In these Epistles then he represents the Apostle as supplying his fellowworkers, Titus and Timothy, with counsels and instructions which they were to remember and apply so that the Church might continue healthy in doctrine and practical life. To return to this Pauline wisdom is still the need of the Church. In this attempt the Pastoral writer has made use of genuine portions of Pauline correspondence to which he had access. But he has given them a setting which is different from the original circumstances in which they appeared. These genuine fragments are likely a few of many such 'notes' in which Paul would deal with matters affecting his missionary journeys and personal necessities. This general conclusion may be elucidated further by the following questions and answers:

(*a*) Why is the traditional view considered inadequate? The chief difficulties may be stated briefly. (1) The traditional view admits that in order to 'place' the Pastorals we have to think of Paul as having been set free from

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the Roman imprisonment, and that the Pastorals connect with the ministry that followed upon that release. But the known evidence, if not proof, is strongly in favour of the contention that there was no such release. (2) Much in the mode of address in the Pastorals is strange when we remember that St Paul is speaking to friends to whom he was bound by intimate ties of friendship; the strong emphasis for example upon his apostolic credentials seems out of place. 'It is psychologically inconceivable,' says P. N. Harrison, 'that the real Paul would have addressed the real Timothy and Titus in many of the terms or in the general tone adopted by the Paul of these letters' (*The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*). (3) The Epistles suggest a time situation in the life of the Church which could hardly be contemporary with Paul's ministry. The impression is rather of Christian congregations 'settling down,' putting their togetherness into orderly shape, with the days of enthusiasm behind, and the difficulties of adjustment in a hostile world in front of them. (4) Finally it is felt that though the Pastorals are interested in doctrine much that was characteristic in Paul's mind is absent. The evangelical glow, the dynamic inwardness of faith in which he gloried suffers considerable reduction here. These points strain the traditional interpretation.

(*b*) What in the Pastorals is definitely Pauline? That there are portions of Pauline correspondence seems certain. The largest portion is to be found in 2 Timothy, which is regarded as the earliest of the three Epistles. In 1 Timothy there is little that bears decisively a Pauline signature. With regard to Titus we may note Harnack's opinion that possibly one-third of it may be substantially from Paul, though that has not remained unaltered. A generous estimate of the Pauline content would likely include the following:

2 Tim. i. 1-10, 16-18; ii. 8-15; iv. 1-2, 6-22.
1 Tim.: the personal references in chap. i., and certain credal and doxological sentences in chaps. ii. and vi.
Tit. iii. 1-7, 12, 13, and the opening section of chap. i.

But it must be confessed that the attempt at a literary analysis of this kind is far from easy. The acknowledgment of this however may be made without prejudice to the main contention that another pen as well as Paul's pen is responsible for what is before us here. One illustration of this will suffice. In 2 Tim. iv. 6-8 we have words that can only mean that Paul's fate is sealed, and death near. But this is followed by a section (iv. 9-13, 21) in which, among other things, Timothy is asked to join Paul, and also to bring Mark 'who is profitable to me for the ministry.' This cannot make sense unless we postulate different times. We may think there was first a note summoning Timothy to Rome, but before he could reach Rome, there reached him another, a farewell message whose conclusion was surely 2 Tim. iv. 6-8. History leaves many details uncertain, but the evidence for the work of a compiler is plain in these documents as they now stand.

(*c*) Can the Pastorals be dated? Many scholars judge that they belong to the first quarter of the second century. Harnack suggests a time within the period A.D. 90–110. Although they are concerned with the Church and with issues affecting its order and organization the Epistles do not suggest a developed period of Church life. Rather they are indicative of a time when the Church was discovering its need for stability and order, when there were problems arising in relation to Christian leadership and the manner of life exhibited in the world by believers. Thus, though it is maintained on critical grounds that the Epistles as such are post-Pauline, they are addressed to conditions which could have arisen in the near sequel of the missionary period. Within half a century there could arise the circumstances towards which the Pastorals direct their 'Pauline' warning and guidance. Priority in appearance must be given to 2 Timothy. We are more aware in it, than in the others, of the 'presence' of St Paul himself, and it was a revival of his authority for the Church of a later day that the unknown author of the Pastorals greatly desired.

III

The Good Companions in the Pastorals

For the purpose he had in view there was a certain fitness in the author's plan to lay a charge upon the Church of his day which had come out of Paul's intimate friendship with

two of his faithful fellowworkers. Upon this personal background some comment will be proper.

(*a*) *Titus.* Of the two companions of Paul Titus remains more hidden. In the Pastoral Epistle he is associated with Church activity in Crete. The connexions of Paul with Crete are difficult to determine, and there is no clear indication that he had any real missionary enterprise there. But from references in other Epistles (Galatians, Corinthians) we discover Titus in service with the Apostle before Timothy appears in that circle of comradeship. The part which he played is hinted at in various estimations that appear in 2 Corinthians. Of an errand he fulfilled at Corinth we read, 'out of his earnest care he went of his own accord to you' (viii. 17). At one place Paul asks, 'Did Titus make a gain (take advantage) of you?' (xii. 18). In an hour of much anxiety God comforts Paul 'by the coming of Titus' (vii. 6). And in the Pastoral Epistle his work is defined as 'that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting' (Tit. i. 5). There is reason therefore to think of Titus as a man who served the Christian cause with practical gifts and administrative ability. To such a type of companion and helper we may feel sure Paul would be greatly indebted. Some commentators describe Titus as the man of tact, and the official who had pleasure in plodding fidelity to the purposes of his leader. Paul had comfort in Titus and with that word a gracious light falls upon his friend. There is then a certain appropriateness in the fact that the Pastoral writer, aware of the need in the Church for a fresh insistence upon the activity and discipline of faith, should embody his message in the form of conference between Paul and Titus.

(*b*) *Timothy.* We know more of Timothy on the biographical side but we may surmise he was less substantial than Titus. Greek and Hebrew elements entered into his racial and religious heritage. Pious home training opened the way early for him into Christian profession, and thereafter the 'youth' becomes the close companion of Paul and his frequent deputy. The love of Paul for Timothy had rich and strong tenderness in it. Timothy is 'our brother,' 'fellow servant,' and 'my true child in the faith.' It was this friend he summoned in lonely hours; to him Paul sent his last words. We may believe that there were inner causes and secrets in that friendship of which we have no account. It may very well be that part of it however is due to the knowledge Paul had that the devoted eagerness of Timothy had to combat with a certain timidity of nature. Something in him exposed him to instability; the spirit of fearfulness could harass him. In Paul's regard for him we notice an anxiety that has this in view. So we see, now and then, Paul putting round him the surety of his own esteem and confidence. It is one of the gracious personal encounters that light up the human scene in the New Testament. One is thankful that the Pastorals give us this, and they disclose to us at this point the psychological wisdom of Paul. For his tenderness remains a manly thing. He would make it potent with the discipline of inspiration. For he stirs up his friend by reminding him that the forces of two generations of piety are his allies in the personal struggle, and on the other hand that trial and suffering are constants in the great comradeship of faith. Take your share of hardship. As he meant it otherwise, 'we are all in this struggle together.' As a commentary upon, and illustration of this wise way of love, one recalls the famous book viii. of Augustine's *Confessions*. It is the account of his conversion. But the Augustine of the '*Tolle lege*' climax tells how, before then, he had listened to a story; of how he felt when Simplicianus told him the story of Victorinus making his profession publicly in Church. 'For when many rejoice together, one is inflamed by another.' In Paul Timothy had both his Simplicianus and his Victorinus.

IV

Contents and Purpose of the Pastorals

We have seen that the three Epistles share in a common purpose. They have in view the practical welfare of the Christian fellowship. They represent, so to speak, a call to religion in the sense that the author desires to translate the faith into norms of living, and to correct with it dispositions and practices that degrade the profession of the believer. The intended direction of doctrine is towards the creation of goodness. What then of the doctrine which is to be applied? Is the Pastoral author a good Paulinist? There are frequent references in all

these Epistles to what the writer calls 'faithful sayings.' These may well have been simple confessional forms, or spiritual songs that had come into use in the teaching and worship requirements of the Church. In the large the writer is content to rely upon this tradition, what is current in the recollection of the community, and he can rightly think that in this 'deposit' he has true contact with St Paul. We get a good statement of this in Tit. ii. 11-14 and iii. 5-7. The grace of God has appeared, in Christ who gave Himself for us there is a salvation which is universal in scope. We receive by the work of the Holy Spirit the cleansing regenerating efficacy of this salvation, the call of this ministry of grace is that we should live soberly and godly in this life, and out of this kindness of God comes to us the pledge of eternal life. This is the doctrine of God which is to be 'adorned in all things.' This is substantial teaching, apostolic fundamentals. At the same time there is a certain change of emphasis. As Dr E. F. Scott points out, little is heard in these pages of the mysticism of Paul, of his glorying in the Cross, and of his deep awareness of the conflict between flesh and Spirit (*Moffatt Commentary*). Faith is not here quite the soaring, winged thing it was to Paul. But the end of the teaching is the service of life. The concern of this defender of the faith is soundness of life. And so, with his eye upon the actual conditions in which the Church is set, he seeks to make plain what is requisite in Christian leadership, what is seemly in personal behaviour, how the discipline of doctrine can guide worship, can remove the unhealthiness of controversy, can make a life useful in the world, and contain its activities in the dignity of order and freedom. Instead of giving a detailed analysis of the very varied matters which the Pastoral counsels include we will select for attention a few of the interests which were important for the writer.

(*a*) In two of the Epistles (1 Timothy and Titus) there is some attention given to what we may call office and service in the Church. We hear of bishops, elders, deacons, of women workers, of Church salaries. All this can become the happy hunting-ground of the ecclesiastical mind bent on finding sanction for some theory of government. But the Pastoral author has a different care. His concern is that, whatever the order of organization be, it should be served by people who love the good and put their hearts into unselfish service. The stewards of the faith are not to be self-willed; they are to be generous and lovers of their kind; temperate and acknowledging the value of discipline; putting before gain the care of the Church; and while bold in the faith ever confessing nevertheless the mystery of godliness. It may astonish us as we read to notice details that are included. There are warnings against greed, drunkenness, violence, misrule at home. A Church that had to be thus warned had tragic moral conditions in it, but the early days were difficult days. After the days of first enthusiasms a poor element is apt to enter the Church. Conditions could easily arise in which the cause had to rely on individuals, commonplace and very creaturely. There is pathos in the Pastoral picture, for good men are scarce and the surrounding paganism is a heavy hindrance. Our surprise however should be tempered by the recollection that it is for character the writer calls. In him, and in his robust demand for honest goodness, the real Church was living and witnessing. Under this reference to the Church we may note the counsel to have in its worship a wide community concern. There is the prayer direction for kings 'and all in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' (1 Tim. ii. 2).

(*b*) There are many references in the three Pastorals to what is described as the 'false teaching.' It is very difficult to be sure what, as opposed to the healthy faith, this was. The writer looks upon it as something very injurious to the welfare of the Church. Timothy is to 'avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science so called' (1 Tim. vi. 20). The warning in Titus is that questions of genealogies and contentions about the law are unprofitable (iii. 9). The reference to the resurrection (2 Tim. ii. 18) suggests that one form of this 'teaching' was more definitely concerned with theological interpretation. Some forms of it are referred to with ridicule as 'profane and old wives' fables' (1 Tim. iv. 7). Doubtless the Church of the day was plagued with various types of lop-sided characters—some claiming a superior occult learning in the 'spiritual,' some under Jewish influence making an obsession of the curiosities of religious history, and some finding religious pretexts for wilful fancies and for interference with the good faith and welfare of their neighbours. All this in the eyes of the writer has in

its wake a flippant minimizing of the gravity of sin, and a disregard for the broad and vital distinctions that Scripture truth has laid down. What these giddy and restless creatures, with their love of novelty and disputing, need to be confronted with is the rule of the mind of God as the tradition of faith has declared it. It is by devotion to Scripture, by study that rightly divides the word of truth, that the servant of the Church is to be equipped for the work of reproof and correction. For in this region the knowledge that leads to righteousness is the knowledge that counts.

(*c*) In this concern with doctrine as moral theology the Pastoral writer subsumes his guidance for life under the term *eusebeia*, which is translated as 'piety' or 'godliness.' For St Paul this is courage, discipline, sound mind; peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, burden-bearing, and rejoicing in tribulation. But a considerable part of the interest of the Pastoral 'Paulinist' is concerned with 'applying' his idea of piety in concrete detail to the walk and conversation of the Christian fellowship. Some consider that in this ethical translation the writer is considerably influenced by Greek conceptions of the virtuous life, and that there is thus a Pelagian quality in his moralism. What are some of the needed manifestations of piety, the 'exercises' by which men and women are to set forth the cause they profess? There must be a thankful acceptance of life's gifts, and modesty in getting and spending; slaves are to be diligent and those who have money must beware of the perils therein; it ill becomes any one to be mixed up in brawling, and due respect for magistrates is rewarding for all; the aged members of the home, and young couples, must preserve its dignity, for if order is not there, children will not learn manners; people who do not provide for their own kindred are denying the faith; idleness and intemperance are bringing the 'cause' into contempt; women must not wander from house to house, and their dress must be without ostentation; office-bearers must put the care of the Church before gain. The reproach of the adversary must be met with what is orderly and seemly. As we read on in this concreted domesticated ruling upon dutifulness we cannot but feel that the Pastoral writer knew a Church with grievous conditions within it. The Pauline enthusiasms seem far away, and the morale of many is ragged. Paganism in the Church is a hard problem in any century; we can appreciate how peculiarly complicated it would be in the early days. Indeed one great value of the Pastoral Epistles is that they sharpen our sense of the grave dangers by which the Church of that day was beset when the task before it was to reach out to organized life, to devise means for Christian nurture where the influences against any superior life were very powerful, and to allay the suspicions of culture and authority with regard to the objectives of the Christian fellowships. They were tracts for difficult days, days when a kind of fallen evangelicalism had to be recalled from excitement and vagaries of will and thought to plain prosaic paths of moral habits and valuations. Even when the author seems to be most Greek, laying stress on balance, outward demeanour, etc., there is, in the light of the times, a Christian strategy in him, for to show the 'good pagans' that a practical Christianity could be fruitful in terms of the ideals *they* considered excellent would be a real victory of faith. In calling for this kind of healthy doctrine he asked much, and he remained an apologist for the good fight of faith in and over the world.

The Pastorals are documents of Church struggle and hope, and as such they have much that is of value for the preacher. But beyond that they play their part in giving us hold of Church history by the right handle. For as the creation of the Church was of God, her survival cannot be understood except in terms of a miracle of His presence with the broken, wayward endeavours of men.

JOHN MACLEOD.

Paul's Son in the Faith.

1 Tim. i. 2.—'Timothy, my own son in the faith.'

1. AN unfortunate theory is fairly prevalent that Timothy shines in the New Testament with a borrowed light, and not by virtue of his own individuality. Fastening upon certain phrases in the Pastoral Epistles which, if they stood alone, might possibly bear that interpretation, it has been assumed that he was a weak-willed youth, full of indecision, easily led astray, prone to play the coward in times of

stress, and capable of nothing either original or distinguished. Timothy, it has been said, appears in no distinct outlines, simply as the attendant of Paul. 'He comes before us for fourteen or at most eighteen years, and vanishes, never to be forgotten, never to be known, loved not for his own sake, but because Paul loved him, an example of the power which lies in a great man to make others noble and even illustrious by his presence.' [1] Whatever tribute this may pay to Paul, it must be challenged so far as Timothy is concerned if it is intended to be a considered statement of the whole case. Few would care to claim for Timothy a character of outstanding strength, but the words 'loved not for his own sake, but because Paul loved him' do not allow for the fact that the planet nearest to the sun is always liable to suffer because of the obvious contrast. When all the facts are taken into consideration it must be seen that Timothy has a claim upon our affection for his own sake.

2. Timothy is first introduced to us in the opening verses of the sixteenth chapter of Acts. There we read: 'Then came Paul to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.' So full of promise did the young man seem, and so great was the impression made upon Paul, that he desired to have him as a companion, probably to take, with Silas, the place of Mark; and from that time he never speaks of him save in terms of unqualified affection. The thought is hardly to be entertained that Paul would have chosen, or, if he had and his choice had proved unwise, would have retained, for so important a calling a weakling; or that Timothy, who knew from the Apostle's experiences at Lystra what hardships the preaching of the Way involved, would have responded so willingly or have continued so loyally had he been of craven mould. There was a simplicity, a willingness, an enthusiasm, and a loyalty about him which won the heart of Paul; and the Apostle was a shrewd judge of character. When he contemplated sending him as a messenger to the Philippian Church he speaks of him thus: 'I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel.' That is one of the finest eulogies that ever came from the pen of Paul. And when at the last, in his prison in Rome, he feels that his course is almost finished, it is Timothy he wants beside him. 'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me,' he writes to him at Ephesus. It is Timothy's hand he wants to feel in his as he goes down into the valley of the shadow.

3. How came Timothy to be the man he was? Timothy stands high among those first valiant saints on whom the Spirit came; but that character of his was not suspended in mid-air. It had a history—a most arresting and significant history.

(1) First, there was *the inheritance of a religious tendency*. The Apostle reminds him of 'the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.' Paul was not a modern psychologist. Apparently he had not been told that acquired characteristics are not transmitted. It may be so. It may be all a matter of environment. This much is sure, that spiritual qualities possessed by Lois reappeared in Eunice and still again in young Timothy, and that these qualities appeared in Timothy through the home in which the spirit of the mother was the formative and creative influence.

¶ It has been said that Kingsley's mother used to wander amid the exquisite scenery of Holne and Dartmoor in the hope that the vastness and beauty and poetry of it all might be impressed upon the mind of her child; and we know how fully her hope was realized. The world has known few clearer-souled men than Charles Kingsley. When Dr Kelman endeavoured to trace the origins of the faith of R. L. Stevenson, he was confronted with the same fact: 'Heredity plays as large a part in religion as it does in any department of human life, and in Scotland there are few men who cannot trace their religious dispositions to some ancestral source.'

While it is true that a man must be more than the product of the traits of his ancestors, it is nevertheless true that the fibre of his

[1] R. F. Horton, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cent. Bible), 51.

manhood is the bequest of a pure and Christian parentage; and that man is supremely to be pitied who has never known such an inspiration. Though he may attain the highest in character, he will ever carry with him the remembrances of the moral conflict of the bygone days. On the contrary,

> Happy he
> With such a mother! faith in womankind
> Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
> Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
> He shall not blind his soul with clay.

It was so with Timothy. He had inherited the religious tendency from Eunice, and through her influence he remained true to it.

(2) Then there was *the consciousness of a spiritual experience*. Great as was the contribution Eunice made to the character of her son, there was another element which made him a man after God's own heart. He became 'wise unto salvation.' There came to him an unwavering conviction that Christ was his Saviour, and a corresponding trust in God his Father. And it happened on this wise. From a child he had known the Scriptures, and found in them that to which his soul responded. Lois and Eunice had interpreted to him the sacred story of Israel's history. And these devoted women would not content themselves with the repetition of the stories of heroism and adventure found within its pages. They would venture into the realm of the prophecies; they would come to some grand chapter which predicted the power of the Messiah. Then they would turn with wistful hopes to some sublime passage which foretold the Passion of the Christ, and they would tell the story of Calvary until Timothy's soul drank in the message of redemption; and, as a child, he responded to the Divine claim and love, and acknowledged the Christ of Nazareth as his Lord and Master.

Are there not many modern settings of the story of Eunice and her son? Is it not true that the Scriptures can so contribute to the fibre of our character as to make us men of God? And is not the reason why the moral nature of many is often atrophied mainly this, that they never allow the magnificence of the Word to lay hold of them as it ought? Its gospel of forgiveness has been regarded as an idle tale; its splendid moral code is held by many to be impracticable in the pressure of modern life; its noble poetry has not charmed them; and its grand enthusiasms have failed to make their hearts glow. There is tremendous moral power in it, but so long as men remain indifferent to its claims it can never effect any transformation in their lives. But to all who love it, to all who regard it as the truth of God and believe that behind it there is the authority of God, it shows the way along which the soul searching for eternal life may find its satisfaction and its rest.

¶ 'In an ancient Syrian church of Travancore, India,' writes Dr Stanley Jones, 'is a wonderful old brass lamp, with about a hundred arms, hanging from the ceiling—at the end of each is a cup with oil and a wick. At the close of the service the young people come up and take one of the wicks from the lamp to guide them home through the night. Standing on a hillock, you can see the points of light here and there moving amid the darkness.' The Bible is like that lamp, with its cups of oil and its wicks, from which those who believe in it receive the light to show them the path of life.

(3) There was yet another thing that in no small way contributed to the character of Timothy—*the inspiration of a noble comradeship*. He was the friend and associate of Paul, and in the magnificence of the Apostle's undaunted courage and constancy he saw the promise of what he too might become. It is so with men to-day. Christian influence must tell for good upon all who have not lost their regard for goodness and their love of moral beauty. Stanley confessed with gratitude that Livingstone's influence upon him changed the whole manner and outlook of his life. Lord Peterborough said to Fénelon, after spending a few days with him, 'If I spend another week here I shall become a Christian in spite of myself.' It was this bond of friendship that kept the soul of Timothy true to the highest.

And when we turn to the service he rendered to the cause of Christ we see the testing of his character. He was 'instant in season, out of season,' as a herald of the Cross. Inasmuch as he is mentioned conjointly with St Paul in the greetings to Philemon and to the churches at Colossae and Philippi, it follows that he must have been with Paul during the first imprisonment, and that is a guarantee of his courage.

Moreover, he was entrusted both at Ephesus and at Corinth with affairs that needed delicate handling, such as could never have been left to one who had proved himself a failure.

But the most noteworthy feature of his ministry was its absolute disinterestedness. He was free from the slightest suspicion of professionalism. He yielded to no opportunity for self-advantage. Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle pleads that he be esteemed on the ground that 'he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.' But it is to the words already quoted from the Philippian letter that we turn for a true appreciation of his worth. Never did Paul allow himself such freedom in the praise of any of his co-workers as in this tender and generous outburst of feeling concerning one who had toiled with him in holy work and whom he had come to esteem as a genuine son. He had discovered one who had learned the secret of Jesus, even the secret of an instinctive, self-obliterating ministry; and, whatever others may do, Paul loved him for his own sake. 'He who occupies himself with the things of Christ' —so runs the happy phrase of the pure-souled Fra Angelico—'must ever dwell with Christ.' This Timothy did; and his charming and devoted ministry is the inspiration of all such as undertake their sacred calling in a kindred spirit, and whose motive finds expression in the self-excluding words,

> I will ask for no reward,
> Except to serve Thee still.[1]

The Gospel of Gladness

1 Tim. i. 11.—'According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God' (R.V.).

We read with some hesitation the words of the Revised Version. They seem to rob us of that familiar and much loved phrase 'the glorious gospel,' and we do not easily let it go. Yet here we need not lose a sentiment in gaining a larger truth. It is not less 'the glorious gospel' because it is 'the gospel of the glory'—the gospel which has for its contents a revelation of the glory of God Himself, of the deep gladness of God, and of that gladness as exhibited in His work to save mankind.

[1] H. S. Seekings, *The Men of the Pauline Circle*, 56.

Four of the most important facts in connexion with the gospel are presented to us in the text: (1) God is revealed as glad to redeem; (2) God's gladness to redeem is seen in Christ, the brightness of His glory and the express radiance of His character; (3) God known in the gospel as glad to redeem is God saving now, saving fully, and saving always; and (4) God revealed in His delight in redemption is for us a source of ethical inspiration and energy.

1. God is described as 'blessed.' The epithet is in itself a revelation—of God Himself, in His full, deep, and calm repose; in His strong and exhaustless delight. And the Divine warrant for the application of this epithet to Himself is presented to us in the gospel, and presented there as it is nowhere else.

We might not have anticipated that such a term should at any time be applicable to God when we think of this devil-possessed world, with its disorder and chaos, its persecutions and fanatical hatred, its ruthless and barbaric cruelties. As a matter of fact, the application of this epithet to God is one of the latest reached by man in his effort to describe Him; and it is certainly one of the most difficult for us to hold fast. Paul did not always think of God as 'the blessed.' His conception of God, derived from the Law of Moses and the traditions of the elders, was that God was just, inflexible, and exceedingly punctilious in His demand of obedience to His laws; partial in His attachment to certain races and classes of men; favouring a select people dwelling in a select land; often invaded by care, and disturbed by anxiety as to the vicissitudes of His great work on the earth. It was not, indeed, until Paul was mellowed by long experience that his conception of God was cleared of all defiling association with the teaching of the Pharisees, and that he was able to apply the term 'blessed' to the Deity, as descriptive of the deep happiness of God Himself, and to assert that the effort to impart that happiness to others increased it for Himself.

Now, Paul had learnt this doctrine of God at the feet of Jesus. He had gone to Jesus, and in the study of His life had found what God really is. He had seen Jesus going about doing good, and healing those that were possessed of the devil; and in the sight he beheld the ceaseless beneficence of the Deity. He listened to the

followers of Christ as they told of the great patience with which the Saviour had borne their blunderings and misconceptions, faults and sins; and he saw in the patience of Christ the patience of God. He had been told the story of the Prodigal Son, the rapture with which Jesus Christ had recited it in the hearing of the people, how His face shone with the light of the deep joy in His own spirit; and as Paul heard the story he felt that He was learning something of the deep gladness of God. Everywhere and always he saw the joy of God in Christ's redemptive work, and he found that he had put into his hands a Divine warrant for applying this particular epithet 'blessed' to God, who delights in redeeming man.

So that God is not to be thought of by us as an eternal 'force,' a 'power that maketh for righteousness,' and does not care whether the goal is reached or not; but rather as a Worker who puts His heart into every stroke of His work, and is pained if the stroke fails. God is not to be conceived as an eternal 'tendency,' as the ancient Epicurean said, or as our modern philosophers report, but as a Person, loving as well as working—working to save, and delighting in saving.

¶ The heathen writers, and especially the poets of the Epicurean school, spoke habitually of 'the blessed gods'; they used the words, perhaps, with a touch of scorn. The gods were blessed because they cared not for mortals, and had no part in the changes, toils, and sorrows of this struggling world below. They reclined in golden ease, sipping their nectar, quite heedless of mankind.

The gods who haunt the lucid interspace of
world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud or moves a
wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
their everlasting calm.

We still speak of God as 'the blessed God,' the infinitely happy God; but not happy in that way: only happy in the fullness of His sympathy with men and His perfect love of men; only happy because He takes part, in the way that Christ has shown, in all their sorrows, burdens, and hopes.

2. Note, again, that the revelation of God as glad to redeem is the express brightness of His glory, and the full revealing of the perfect radiance of His character.

The glory of a young man is his strength—the free outflow of his energies, and the conscious use of the forces with which God has endowed him. The glory of mature man is shown in the work in which he delights most of all and feels best fitted to perform, and his satisfaction becomes a factor in his toil. Raikes revealed his glory when, as a botanist in human nature, he gathered the boys and girls on the Sunday afternoon, taught them the Word of God, and started Sunday schools. The glory of John Howard is shown in the gladness with which he went from prison to prison to improve the criminal population of Europe. The glory of God is shown in the fact that He delights to save man.

To whom will ye liken God? To none save Him who is God, to Jesus Christ, who in every step of His march towards the Cross reveals the straitened condition in which He feels Himself because He cannot reach the goal of the world's salvation as speedily as He would. If the work in which man delights reveals the glory or the meanness of the man, surely the work in which God delights must enshrine Him in our hearts as glorious beyond all others. God revealed to us in the gospel, delighting to redeem men, is God made known to us in the very fullness of His glory.

3. Now God cannot be known as thus glad to redeem without the heart of the gospel being known; and when the heart of the gospel is known, man is saved!

(1) He is saved from misgiving as to the freeness and completeness of the Divine pardon. Bunyan tells us, in his *Grace Abounding*, that for years he lived in agony because he could not discover peace with God. When we turn to the New Testament, we find no repetition of the experience of John Bunyan. The eunuch hears from the lips of Philip the preaching concerning Jesus Christ, becomes a Christian, and is baptized forthwith. Cornelius listens to Peter as he proclaims Christ to him, the Son of that God who is no respecter of persons, but receiveth every one who fears Him and works righteousness; and he at once accepts the Divine pardon, and is invaded and inspired by the energy of the

Holy Ghost. Three thousand on the Day of Pentecost hear of the crucified Jesus as the exalted Lord and Christ, and, listening to and accepting the message, receive salvation from all doubt as to the freeness of God's pardon. How can we doubt the reality and certainty and adequacy of that pardon when God Himself delights to give it?

Come, come to His feet and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name.[1]

(2) To know that God is glad to redeem is certainly salvation from all fear and apprehension concerning the continuity of our Christian progress and the final issue of our Christian endeavour. The early Christians were able to say in a perfectly logical and common-sense way, 'He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' The work in which we delight is not broken off midway. Joy keeps us at it, and makes it easy for us to persevere to the end. So God, having Himself wrought out for us everlasting salvation in Jesus Christ, will assuredly work in us so that we may 'work out our own salvation,' though it may be with much fear and misgiving concerning temptation, but never with a trembling spirit concerning God or the adequacy of His resources.

(3) And if this message be accepted, shall we not also be saved from any misgiving concerning the final overcoming of evil by goodness? Shall we complain because we cannot clearly understand all that is taking place in our own day and within our own observation, and speak as though God had ceased to attend to and rejoice in His saving work? No; rather let us find serenity and joy in the thought that God has set Himself with glad-heartedness to the work of universal redemption, that His counsels stand fast, and that His purpose is from generation to generation, and will triumph. So we shall be able to enter into the significance of the saying of Nehemiah, 'The joy of the Lord is your stronghold.'

[1] Faber.

4. But we shall do injustice to the text if we fail to recognize that this incidental statement is so introduced by the Apostle as to indicate to us that the selfsame gospel is to him a high ethical standard and an unfailing source of ethical energy. 'According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.' What is it that is to be 'according to this gospel?' It is 'sound doctrine,' says St Paul: that is to say, the teaching that makes men sound in moral wind and limb, and fits them for a robust and manly life. What is in Paul's mind is the teaching which makes manhood and builds men up in the three qualities that he speaks of in the previous part of this paragraph—in *love* that is out of a pure heart, in a *good conscience*, and in *faith* that is unfeigned—teaching which carries men on from all that is hateful and unreal and distrustful to that which is radiant with love, true in its loyalty to God and to conscience, and rich in its repose on the infinite power and grace of Christ.

¶ William Carey in his *Journal* exclaims, 'Oh, that God would make the Gospel successful among these Hindus! That would undoubtedly make them honest men, and I fear that nothing else ever will.' That is an instructive witness, and it throws light on the Apostle's conception.

Those who are familiar with Paul's writings will recognize the facility with which he introduces at different points those words 'according to.' He wishes to show that there is no limit to 'the power' that makes good Christian men of us, and he says that it works in us 'according to the power that raised Jesus from the dead.' Thus he puts into our hands as a standard test of the Divine grace the great miracle of Christianity. He wishes us to know that we can offer any prayer that comes into our heart that concerns the building up of our character, and he says it will be answered 'according to the power that worketh in us,' and therefore God will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. So, here, he is telling the teachers what they are to teach, and says that the old Law gave us a sketch of an ideal man, but that the sketch was imperfect; it required to be completed. The Law of Moses set before us a type of manhood which has to be corrected and enlarged by the revelation of the real man, Christ Jesus. That is 'sound doctrine'—doctrine which makes men morally and spiritu-

ally sound, which enables men to attain to the manhood of Christ.

So this gospel is for Paul a certain rule that he carries about with him to test all teaching. Just as a carpenter carries with him a three-foot rule, so Paul carries with him this gospel—as a measure of ethical teaching. And he vindicates a position like this by discovering to us the deep delight of God in the redemption of mankind, which is calculated to give force to the conscience, to quicken the love of the heart, and perfect the consecration of the man; and any teaching that falls short of this great goal is not 'according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.'

The Faithful Saying

1 Tim. i. 15.—'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.'

When the Apostle speaks of 'a faithful saying' we may assume that he refers to something that had passed into a saying in certain circles; and we might infer that there were some current sayings about which you could not be so sure, and which were not to be accepted without careful inquiry and examination. Here was a saying on which men could confidently build; whose faithfulness had been and was being proved, and of the truth of which Paul himself was a conspicuous example. About the revolution which had taken place in his own life there could be no manner of doubt. He was literally a new creature, totally different and opposite to what he had been, and he consistently and emphatically declared that Jesus Christ had done it by His converting grace and power; and, moreover, the same thing was taking place in other men's lives. This 'faithful saying' is really the heart of the gospel. It contains within itself the stupendous facts of the Incarnation, the atoning work of Christ, and His living presence and power among men.

1. The verse consists of two parts. The first is the everlasting gospel: the second, the amazing self-estimate of its chief exponent in the New Testament and, one may say, in the history of the Christian Church. This self-estimate, one of those flashes of intimate autobiography which invest the writings of Paul with perennial interest, is so amazing as to arrest the attention and almost to absorb it. Dr John Watson calls it one of the most impressive utterances, if you consider the writer, in the history of religion. It has always puzzled people that this great saint, so Christlike in his selfless and consuming devotion and service to God and men, should write himself down in these opprobrious terms. Some have endeavoured to explain it away, and have suggested that it does not quite mean what, in English, it says. But it is not to be explained away. It really means what it says, and is Paul's honest conviction about himself.

Let us say about it, first, that it is entirely characteristic of him. It is an example of his invincible lowliness—a lowliness of mind which he not only never lost, but which was progressive. In his early Christian service he styled himself the least of the Apostles: later, in unofficial imprisonment, as less than the least of all saints; and now, in his old age, as 'the chief of sinners.' This was the self-consciousness in which he preached to men. But this consciousness never dimmed his assurance of his apostleship; he maintained that against all his critics who questioned or threw doubt upon it. His sense of utter unworthiness only deepened and heightened his wonder at the grace of apostleship which Christ had conferred upon him. He never doubted the conferring.

¶ Archbishop Davidson said of Queen Victoria (and he knew her and was admitted to her confidence more intimately than perhaps any other man) that 'as a woman she was shy and modest, but as Queen she was neither.' Unhesitatingly, when the occasion demanded it, she asserted her position and authority.

If we ask how the Apostle comes to have this consciousness, saying not I *was*, but *I am* the chief of sinners, the answer is to be found in his standard of goodness. And we know where Paul's standard was. His sense of sin sprang from his vision of the moral perfection and glory of Christ, a glory which grew in its greatness and wonder as his knowledge increased; and all the time his conscience became more sensitive and the ideal loftier. 'It is,' says Alexander Whyte, 'the sight of Jesus Christ that does it. It is God's holy law of love entering our hearts that does it. It is when I take my own heart, with its self-love and self-

seeking, and envy and grudging (and uncleanness) and lay it alongside the holy heart of my Lord. Then I abhor myself and repent in sackcloth and ashes. Then I cry out to God in the words of the Fifty-first Psalm : Have mercy upon me, O God.'

2. Turn, now, to the other part of the verse : 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Let us begin by trying to see what are the implications of this statement.

(1) First of all, it is an historical statement : 'Christ Jesus came into the world.' There is a 'Jesus of history.' We are often told that St Paul said very little about the life of Jesus Christ. That is quite true. His gaze was almost entirely absorbed by the wonder of His death and resurrection. But if a person died, he must have lived, and we cannot get away from the Apostle's conviction that Jesus Christ was historical. Do we want to know what his conception of Jesus was ? Listen to his words : 'Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.' There is Paul's conception of Christ.

The philosopher, T. H. Green, desired to take the portrait of Christ 'out of the region of history and of the doubts that surround all past events' and 'fix it in the purified conscience as the immanent God.' Men have felt that if Christianity could be dissociated from the historic basis and established simply as self-evidencing in the sphere of the Spirit, it would be an enormous boon. Whatever might be preserved—and no one doubts that a form of religion would still persist—it is certain that historic Christianity as a dynamic would inevitably wane, and might, in the end, perish. Christianity as a religion consists both of ideas and of facts.

¶ In his *Autobiography* Rutherford, who, as a minister, is passing through a time of great intellectual and spiritual strain, argues with Mardon, the free-thinker. And it is Mardon the sceptic who voices this objection to a mere 'Christ of dream.' '"How," he asks, "can a man base himself upon a myth ? We do not know that Christ ever lived, or that, if He lived, His life was anything like what is attributed to Him. A mere juxtaposition of the Gospels shows how the accounts of His words and deeds differ according to the tradition followed by each of His biographers." I interrupted Mardon at this point by saying that it did not matter whether Christ actually existed or not. What the four Evangelists recorded was eternally true . . . whether it was ever incarnated in a being bearing His name or not. "Pardon me," said Mardon, "it does very much matter. It is all the matter whether we are dealing with a dream or a reality. I can dream about a man's dying on the Cross in homage to what he believed, but I would not, perhaps, die there myself ; and when I suffer from hesitation whether I ought to sacrifice myself for the truth, it is of immense assistance to me to know that a greater sacrifice is possible. To know that somebody has poetically imagined that it is possible is no help." '

It is vitally important to know that the Jesus of history is a Fact, that He came into the world. It is not a dream that men have imagined. It is the significant seminal fact that Christianity would never have been preached to the world apart from the Jesus of history. Professor Percy Gardner is on impregnable ground when he writes : 'It is an essential part of Christian belief to hold that Jesus Christ came into the world and lived as a man among men, and died as a man on the Cross . . . to believe that the Spirit of Christ, or Christ in the Spirit, lived on in the Church and became its guide and inspiration.'

(2) To make this affirmation involves the belief that the coming of Jesus was purposive. St Paul speaks of 'the purpose of God in Christ Jesus' ; and the purpose embraced what is asserted here—that Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

¶ There is a story of a missionary among a heathen people who waited for years to discover a word in their vocabulary that would convey to them the essential note of the work of Christ. Happening to hear a native tell one evening, to his companions around the camp fire, how his master had pulled him out of a lion's mouth, the missionary eagerly put to him the question—'And what did you call a master who did that for you ?' 'I called him,' replied the native, 'my saviour'—giving at the same time, in the vernacular, the

word that the missionary had been longing to discover.

It is true that Christ often explained the purpose of His coming in other words, but they always pointed to the same thing. He had come, He said, to show the Father and to do the Father's will. He had come to be the Light of the world, and to give men life more abundantly. He had come to be the servant of all, and to set men an example that they should follow in His steps. He had come to give deliverance to the captives, and to heal the bruised and broken heart. He had many gracious, merciful, saving ends in view, but they were all included in the one supreme purpose to save sinners from their sins, to scatter the darkness and heal the blindness which sin had made, to remove the alienation from God which sin had produced, to redeem men from the sorrows, heart-burnings, and fears which sin brought, and to shed abroad in all hearts the love which sin kills. Man has only one enemy in Christ's thought, though he often thinks he has a legion. Sin is the enemy, and Christ's long warfare in living and dying was against that. 'He came into the world to save sinners.'

At the close of his book, *What Are We to do with our Lives?*, Mr H. G. Wells writes that 'a time will come when men will sit with history before them, or with some old newspaper before them, and ask incredulously, "Was there ever such a world?"' If ever the world needed salvation it needs it now. Christ Jesus came into the world to save. He came to save us from the power of sin; and deliverance from sin is always a deliverance into goodness. It is deliverance into a persistent desire for truth and goodness, for friendship and fellowship with God. It is deliverance into the love of God, the honest striving to do, and to get done, God's will. That is salvation, and the message and the Cross of Christ have proved, in the experience of men, the power unto such salvation.

Why St Paul was Saved

1 Tim. i. 16.—'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.'

In this chapter a few verses occur, ending with the text, in which for one moment the Apostle lifts the veil from his own life-story, and relates not merely some wonderful experiences, but his own opinion as to what they meant. Self-revelation is always interesting, as may be seen from the lasting popularity of books like the *Confessions* of St Augustine or Rousseau; but the value of these books, after all, depends on the greatness of the man revealed.

St Paul must often have told the story of his conversion. The special interest, however, of this passage is that, continuing his frankness, he explains not only what God did, but just why it was done—why so great a sinner was forgiven; and in the added explanation we gain at once a most winning glimpse of the Apostle's heart and one or two instructive thoughts about ourselves.

1. First, observe *the contrast between Paul's judgment of himself and God's treatment of him.* Now his verdict on his own life and character is stated unequivocally in the preceding verse. 'Sinners,' he writes, 'of whom I am chief.' No beating about the bush, and no ostentatious labouring of the point either; just the plain, quiet, manly statement that, looking back to his persecuting days—the part, for instance, he had played in the death of Stephen—he regarded himself as having been the most guilty of men.

Does it look strained and artificial and savouring of cant for an obviously good man to say of himself that he is the chief of sinners? And yet is it not quite intelligible that the better a man is, the more clearly he will perceive the gulf stretching between his evil and God's holiness; just as it is the sharpest-eyed look-out who can best tell how far the ship still is from land, or as Lord Kelvin, the leading physicist of his generation, could describe his own scientific career, as he did near the end, by the one word 'failure'?

¶ 'God,' says Bunyan, 'has given no man the power of knowing the true greatness of any sin but his own, and therefore the greatest sinner that every one knows is himself.'

There, then, we have the Apostle's verdict on himself; now mark the contrast in the attitude of God. How was this self-condemned man dealt with? As he puts it twice over, in three words that sum up everything: 'I obtained mercy.' He had been ready to take the lowest place and turn himself out of all good company for ever; but Christ drew him close to the Father's heart, blotted out the

past, and opened up the future. Instead of rejection he found a welcome that gave peace even to his tortured heart.

Now we have here a clear principle that operates unfailingly in the relations between God and man—the judgment of God on the sinful is in this respect the precise opposite of their judgment on themselves. What He imparts, always, is what we should not dare to claim. The Pharisee, pouring out a flood of self-congratulation on his virtues, missed all the sweetness of God's mercy; the publican, standing with head bowed and heart heavy with self-loathing, learnt there and then what it means to be forgiven. He *was* bad, but he knew it, and cast himself on God; therefore he obtained just those blessings, of acceptance and conscious sonship, of which he felt unworthy. Perhaps both men would have been astounded had you told them how different God's thoughts were from theirs.

Jowett once was asked by a clever talker at an evening party what he thought of Jesus Christ. 'The really important thing,' said he, 'is not what I think of Christ, but what He thinks of me.' And we *can* discover what Christ thinks of us—and His thought is God's—by ascertaining what we think of ourselves. If we can deliberately pronounce that, all things considered, our record is fairly satisfactory, and, by comparison with the majority of our neighbours, more than gratifying, then we have everything to learn of the mercy of God. But if we know enough of our own heart to interpret for us the words, 'sinners, of whom I am chief,' be sure a work of love and pity has been begun which a faithful Redeemer will make complete.

2. Then, again, note *St Paul's consciousness of special Divine love.* His language on the point is curiously emphatic; so much so that we can perceive he regarded his own case as being a test case. His actual words are: 'I obtained mercy, that in me as the foremost of sinners Jesus Christ might shew forth the *whole* of His long-suffering.' In those far-off persecuting days he had all but got beyond the reach of God's love. All the forbearance of Christ had had to be exerted to keep a place for him. In retrospect he now saw that his recovery had put a heavy strain on the Divine pity, and that all the resources of mercy had had to be called into action. Nothing less than the whole of Christ's long-suffering would have been enough.

Ruskin somewhere says that, as we stand and contemplate the Divine works in Nature, we are often moved to say, not 'There has been a great effort here,' but 'There has been a great power here.' The impression we receive of God's omnipotence in the physical world is that of might operating without exertion. But in redemption it is very different. There the Bible represents the Divine love as ransoming us by a vast effort of self-sacrifice; the breach yawning between right and wrong could be healed only by God exerting Himself to the utmost and throwing the whole strength of His nature into the chasm. There was a conflict, in which the power of man's sin and of God's love was tried, and victory remained with love because it was willing to pay the cost and take up the burden. And just as we feel the Atonement to have been a great unprecedented Divine act, in which God spared Himself nothing, so, if we have experienced forgiveness, we shall each of us sympathize with St Paul's feeling, expressed here, that God's reception of *us* called for peculiar and special grace.

So, whatever happens, let us try to preserve our sense of wonder at the love of God. We have to turn our thoughts to Calvary every day, and then, by taking in something more of its amazing mercy, we shall keep fresh our feeling of peculiar gratitude. We needed 'the whole of Christ's long-suffering'; nothing less would have sufficed.

¶ 'Ah, Mr Spurgeon,' said an old woman whom the famous preacher was visiting, 'if Jesus Christ does save me, He shall never hear the last of it.'

3. Once more, *God redeems men for the sake of other people.* As Father Nicholas of Serbia used to put it during the last war: 'We can be saved only in the plural, not in the singular; only collectively, not as individuals; that is, *we* can be saved, but *I* cannot be saved' in isolation. God's purpose has wider bounds than our single destiny.

How far, let us ask, do we carry that indispensable conviction into our thoughts of the spiritual life? What has it meant for those nearest to us that we bear Christ's name? Has there been anything in and about us which has

led them to think well of our Master and envy our discipleship. We fathers and mothers, are we as conscious as we might be that Christ found us not because He sought us alone, but because He cared for the young lives we are training? We take endless pains to secure that our property passes on to them intact; are we as eager to ensure their possession of our faith in God? Love has visited us in order that it may pass on through us to others we can touch and bless.

But more, the faith cherished solely as a private luxury inevitably fades and withers. The talent which too many believers take and wrap in a napkin and bury down in the ground, well out of sight, is just their faith in Jesus. In that sphere they live like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, holding communication with nobody; with the result that, since imports mostly vary with exports, their faith grows no richer or stronger with the years. *They* obtained mercy, as a pattern to those who should afterwards believe—that broader purpose has been forgotten. But the cleansing stream which has entered the heart must flow onward, as a river of living water.

¶ In his *God in the Slums* Hugh Redwood tells us how his association with the Salvation Army led him to take an interest, not only in its social activities, but also in its evangelistic work. And it was then that he made a great discovery. For he found that the joy of leading men and women into the Kingdom of God deepened tremendously his own sense of spiritual values. The more he imparted, the more he possessed. He had been brought up in the tradition of those who speak of 'conversion' as if, save in relation to St Paul, it were something not quite nice to mention; but in the Salvationist meetings he saw that the phenomenon of his own spiritual re-birth was in fact repeatedly paralleled and men and women changed past recognition by the power made manifest in these assemblies. 'How great then was my joy when words were given me that led my listeners to decision.'

It all means that, if one man has found eternal life, it must be meant for everybody. St. Paul makes that point with emphasis. He felt that his own experience had fixed a principle, namely, that the Divine mercy has no limits. So every Christian has a right to stand up and say to his neighbour: 'I have been saved. I have been given the friendship of God, therefore you need not despair.'

The Duke of Wellington once in a foreign land had to get his men into safety, but for that a deep rapid river must be crossed. Neither bridge nor ford could be found, though they hunted up and down to find one. At last the Duke went to a hilltop with his telescope, and far down the riverside he saw a town, and on the opposite bank a village, and he said: 'Between town and village there must be a bridge or ford'; and so it turned out. So to the disheartened, this voice of St Paul comes bidding us keep up our courage. Other men have been in straits, and they have found the ford.

The Moral Conditions of Belief

1 Tim. i. 19.—'Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.'

1. We must try to understand what the Apostle means when he speaks here of putting away a good conscience. He means what, in the idiom of to-day, we should describe as tampering with conscience. The good conscience of the text does not just signify an approving conscience; it signifies a conscience that is working well, much as we might speak of a good clock. And as a man can tamper with his clock, so he can subtly tamper with his conscience, until at last it ceases to be good. Where the conscience is allowed to work in liberty it registers unalterable certainties. It takes such things as truth and love and purity and stamps them with the signature of God. And whenever anybody begins to doubt and question these abiding and instinctive certainties he is thrusting from him a good conscience. Men do that often under the stress of passion. They make the worse appear the better reason. They are eager to get the approval of their conscience for actions that are dubious or unmoral. Such action implies a certain violence, and the word Paul uses here carries that suggestion. It is the word that is used of the Egyptian when he thrust away the interfering Moses. A little violent handling of one's conscience, like a little violent handling of one's clock, and we silence the chiming of God's hours.

¶ 'Under every guilty secret there is hidden

a brood of guilty wishes whose unwholesome infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires—the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity.' [1]

2. Now we know that when any one does this he invariably makes shipwreck of his life. But what the Apostle tells us is that if any one does this he invariably makes shipwreck of his *faith*. The Christian faith, he says, does not strike its roots into a brilliant intellect but into the soil of a good conscience. Tamper with conscience and God becomes unreal. Wrest and manipulate its instant verdicts and love and honour and truth disappear from heaven. A man may have faith in all the Christian verities though his intellectual processes be childish, but he can never have faith in them once he begins to juggle with his conscience. To put it in more modern language, the conditions of all living faith are moral. They lie not in intellectual apprehension but in honesty of intention and of heart. All which is fitted to be of infinite comfort to those who grope in intellectual darkness and are troubled because they cannot understand. No one makes shipwreck of his faith because he is powerless to understand, or because the brain is dull. Shipwreck comes about when the inner voice of conscience, challenging to truth and love and purity, is disowned in the interests of sin.

3. That this, too, was the teaching of our Lord is seen in His most exquisite beatitude. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' He said, 'for they shall see God.' Now, to see God is not to set our eyes on Him. It is to have a living faith that He exists. It is to believe—what Christ Himself believed—that He is a loving and redeeming Father and that just because He loves us He is guiding us with perfect understanding, and carrying out His purpose in the world. A faith like that alters the whole of life and makes the sun shine in the darkest day. It inspires serenity and courage. And the one condition of that faith, according to the teaching of our Lord, is not intellectual but moral. To be pure of heart is not to be perfect, else there were no hope for any man. It is to be sincere and single-minded. It is to refuse to juggle with conscience. It is to hold to it, through every temptation, that the imperious voice of conscience *must* be heeded, and that love and truth and purity and loyalty are demanded at whatsoever cost. Live like that, says Jesus, and you will never live long in a godless universe.

¶ 'Seeing is believing,' says the world in its smart proverbial way of speaking, and this is often quoted as a closure to any talk about the reality of the unseen. But any one with any spiritual experience at all can match that with a retort which reopens the whole question, 'Believing is seeing.' We discover God through the exercise of faith—the purified heart which discerns spiritual realities.[1]

'Praying,' says an eminent Anglican preacher, 'will either make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make him leave off praying.' There is great truth in this. Sin deliberately continued, a good conscience ruthlessly put away, is sure to make us unwilling to believe in the existence of a holy God. And what we are unwilling to believe we can easily find pretexts for disbelieving. A sinful, selfish life will go far to incapacitate a man for believing in a God of absolute purity and perfect love. Mark the downward course of one of these two men—Hymenaeus—whose case is brought before us as a solemn warning. We are told he had put away a good conscience. In another place the Apostle tells us he has erred concerning the truth, trying to persuade himself he shall never be raised from the dead, that the only resurrection is past already; and then lastly his false teaching spreads throughout the Church like a gangrene, subverting the faith of others.

So we are led to this great truth for all who are really eager to believe—the way to faith is not the way of intellect. It is rather the simple way of duty. Far better than puzzling our brains is to do the next thing that is demanded. It may be hard to know what we should *believe*; it is seldom hard to know what we should *do*. And in doing *that*, at the command of conscience, with a single eye and a pure heart, we find ourselves, perhaps when we never dreamed of it, on the avenue that leads to God. We come to feel that truth is on the throne, or conscience never could demand truth. We come

[1] George Eliot.

[1] M. Devine.

to feel that love is in the heavens, because at every hazard *we* must love. And as truth and love and purity and honour are but idle words without a person, duty brings us to the feet of God. To do His will is the way to know. To listen to conscience and obey it is to touch the reality of all its values. He who does that, although the winds be contrary, will never suffer shipwreck in the deeps, but will come at last to his desired haven.

¶ 'No one has a true idea of the right until he does it; no one has a genuine reverence for the right until he does it often and with cost to himself; no one has a peace ineffable in the right till he does it always and with alacrity.' [1]

Intercession and Its Objectives

1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.—'I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.'

1. 'For kings and all that are in high place.' The sins and failings of monarchs are, notoriously, often of the most unmistakable kind. Too frequently, as we know, they succumb to the peculiar temptations which surround the throne. This consideration makes it, at first view, reasonable to question the value of the prayers, however earnest and sincere, made continually on their behalf, and how far they can be expected to help in the way desired by right-minded worshippers.

As an illustration of the apparent futility of much praying we may take the case of our English George IV. From the very hour almost of his birth in 1762, through nearly sixty years as Prince of Wales and as Regent, George was the object of daily or weekly intercessions, in Anglican churches particularly. Some portion of the intense earnestness in praying that characterized the Methodist and Evangelical revivals, which synchronized with Prince George's rising manhood, must certainly have found its way into numberless prayers on his behalf. The character of the best of these prayers may perhaps be judged from an address presented to his royal father, after the young George's birth, by the Quaker community, in which the hope was expressed that 'formed to piety and virtue he may live beloved of God and man' and may fill the British throne with lustre. Inasmuch as all this praying for him by name started from his very birth and went on while his character was in the mould, it should have had an excellent opportunity for taking effect. In the event, George IV became, by general consent, an exceptionally worthless type of individual—selfish, deceitful, malicious, and immoral.

Undoubtedly we have here a problem which, if properly faced up to, must leave the average believing Christian bewildered and baffled. Are public prayers for those set in authority completely futile? If so, ought they not to be discontinued? Does the apparent failure of our prayers here provide a test case which invalidates all intercessory prayer?

2. Another extreme type of unanswered intercession may perhaps throw light upon the problem. Many who have made irretrievable moral shipwreck in this life have been the offspring of parents of whom one or both have been passionately devoted to them and earnest before God in prayer on their behalf from the day of their birth and before. St Augustine, it is true, accepted the Bishop's assurance to his mother, and maintained that it was not possible for the son of many tears and prayers to perish. Unfortunately this is disproved by the record of many a sad career, though beyond the grave such prayers may well avail.

There is a passage at the end of the Epistle of St John in which the writer speaks of those who have committed a 'sin unto death,' saying that he does not enjoin any one to offer prayer on their behalf. However wrong it be to accept this as a definite prohibition of prayer for the worst sinners, yet it suggests that the effectiveness—for this life—of such prayer is very problematic. Here, perhaps, we have a hint for the solution of our difficulty.

God has endowed men with a large measure of His own free will, and, being unwilling, perhaps we may say unable, to bring fallen men back into harmony with Himself without the full consent of that free will, He allows men to persist for an indefinite period in ways of life that bring disaster and misery, while they resist the heavenly streams of love and mercy that are ever being directed towards them. In these beneficent streams our intercessions find their natural place, and it is just the independence of human wills, when sufficiently

[1] Coleridge.

self-centred and rebellious against Divine law, that makes them unavailing.

3. In considering the choice of objects for our prayers it is certainly right in exceptional cases to trust to the guidance of a strong leading or moving of the spirit without supporting arguments. But as a rule reason and experience suggest that they should be directed towards those persons and groups where the conditions are present that will be likely to give an entrance to their influence. This will not be the case where the will of a person appears to be inflexibly set in a course of wrong action, while at the same time external circumstances, especially when embodied in an imposing institution or organization, are such as to contribute to the success of that course.

Again, our intercession is unlikely to reach its desired objective unless two factors are present in the mind and heart of the intercessor: first, some considerable knowledge of the character and circumstances of the persons prayed for; and along with this a deep and genuine love, or at least imaginative sympathy, for those persons, not merely a formal sense of duty or a conviction that our own welfare is bound up with their activities, as when men pray passionately in time of war for the general who is most likely to destroy their enemies.

It is impossible indeed to assign any value to a prayer which lacks some basis, however small, of unselfish affection or interest. But in the case of prayers which, having this affection-basis, are nevertheless most unlikely to reach their particular objective, owing either to an insufficiency of knowledge and understanding on the part of the petitioner or to an excess of perversity and unfavourable environment on the part of the person prayed for—it would be quite wrong to suppose that such prayers are wasted and without value for God and man.

In Longfellow's poem *Evangeline* the priest says to the woman who was searching vainly for her lost lover:

Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning
Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment;
That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain.

This rightly suggests that he who truly prays, like him who truly loves, will himself benefit from his efforts, however directly frustrated. But the reality seems to include much more than this; all true prayer that for one reason or another misses its intended object flows into a mighty reservoir, the ocean of God's love, and contributes to swell those outflowing streams which soften or refresh with drops of blessing all hearts in any degree open to Him.

4. Much of what has been said will apply also to praying in regard to conditions of society and to social or religious movements, so far as they can be distinguished from the persons involved in them. We may pray for international peace or for social justice or some great reform—for anything that can be comprehended in the coming of God's Kingdom on earth; intercession for such causes may be heartfelt, well-informed, and widespread, and yet may appear, for the time being at least, to have been completely ineffectual; indeed, reaction instead of progress may seem to be registered. The reason will be in the main because the evils attacked by our prayers are so virulent, so strongly entrenched in the hearts of men and in the organization of vested interests that all our active goodwill is unavailing to dissipate them. But in these fields also we may be sure that no true prayer made in the name or spirit of Jesus is ever really wasted. If, for instance, many of us have prayed long and earnestly for international peace, and yet the catastrophe of another world-war has come, because the many evil forces making for war have been too strong for the forces (including our prayers) making for peace, yet every fragment of our efforts will be treasured up in God's storehouse, in readiness for the day when the flames of war will have died down and the task of building up a new and more Christlike civilization out of the ruins of the present ill-founded order is renewed once more.

Pray in the darkness if there be no light.
Far is the time, remote from human sight,
When war and discord on the earth shall cease:
Yet every prayer for universal peace
Avails the blessed time to expedite.[1]

[1] Hartley Coleridge.

Christ as Mediator

1 Tim. ii. 5.—'For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all' (R.V.).

The commentators tell us that the actual word 'mediator' is to be found only in this passage; but the idea of mediation runs right through the Bible. The Old Testament is full of mediation. There is a great deal said about the ministry of angels in the older books of the Bible. They were 'mediators,' 'go-betweens,' between God and men. And not angels only, but men also were called to this high office and mission. Moses, for instance, was the mediator between God and the people of Israel; he pleaded in the name of the people with God; he spoke as the representative and mouthpiece of God to the people. And not Moses only, but all priests and prophets were mediators, or at any rate it is true to say there was a mediatorial element in all their work and service. But all these mediators were imperfect, and their mediatorial service but partial. Paul brushes them all aside, as if they were scarcely worth reckoning, and fastens our exclusive attention on Christ: 'There is one mediator between God and men—Himself man,—Christ Jesus.'

What exactly is meant by the word 'mediator?' The Greek word *mesitēs*, which is here translated 'mediator,' means literally 'one who stands in the middle.' But he is one who stands in the middle for the purpose of drawing two together in a pact or covenant, or else (and here we touch the very marrow of the Pauline use of the word) he is one who stands in the middle in order to bring about a reconciliation where there has been division or enmity.

Could any title better describe the work of Christ than this word Mediator? He is the great Middle-man, drawing estranged parties together into concord and peace. Throughout the centuries He has been busy at His reconciling work, filling up gulfs of distrust and hate, bridging great chasms of difference, pulling down middle walls of partition, and everywhere making peace. In every sphere He has been carrying on His mediatorial activities—in the individual soul, on the field of history, between man and God. And the hope for the individual and for the world lies here—that He has not abdicated His functions. The Middle-man is still at His work. And He will not cease from it till our peace shall be like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

There are three great spheres within which Christ carries on His mediatorial work.

1. He is *Mediator between God and man*. This is the sphere within which Christ does His mightiest mediating work, and in that sphere He stands alone. The very fact that a mediator was necessary proceeds on the assumption that man was sundered far from God. About this fact there can be no dispute. All life and experience bear it out.

There are two main causes of alienation from God—ignorance and sin. Let us look, first, at the fact that multitudes are *separated from God by sheer ignorance*. That is the condition of the pagan world to-day. That was the condition of the entire world before Christ came. By its wisdom it knew not God. It could only grope after God if haply it might feel after Him and find Him. And to that wandering and alienated world Christ came, as the Mediator between God and men. The Gnostics were conscious of the vast distance that separated Almighty God from mortal man, and they tried to bridge the gulf by imagining that there was an almost endless chain of spiritual beings, the first link in the chain being one only a little lower than God, the second a little lower than the first, other successive links descending in spiritual excellence by subtle shades and gradations until a being was reached who was only a little better than man. That was how the Gnostic tried to mediate, by these endless genealogies of his. Paul, perhaps, has these Gnostic speculations in his mind in this passage. He brushes them almost contemptuously aside. For the multitudinous aeons of Gnosticism he substitutes the One Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus.

This is the prophetic aspect of Christ's mediatorial work. He brought God and man together by revealing to men the character of God in His own words and life. And in this respect He is the One Mediator. If Jesus was not the Revelation of God, if He was not Himself God manifest in the flesh, then God is still a God who hides Himself. Apart from Jesus we have no right to speak of God as Father. History does not reveal 'the Father.' Nature does not reveal 'the Father.' 'No man cometh to the Father *but by me*.' That is our Lord's own

imperious and challenging claim. Leave Christ out of account, and God will be a God afar off, and we shall be back in the night of ignorance and fear. It is in Jesus that we cease to wander in some far country; we become members of the family of God, and receive the spirit of sonship by which we cry 'Abba Father.'

Second, there is *the separation caused by sin*—which is the separation Paul has in his mind here. Sin always results in fear and estrangement. That was the solemn truth Isaiah proclaimed to the Jews in exile: 'Your iniquities,' he said, 'have separated between you and your God.' Here is how St Paul describes the condition of the Colossians: 'You,' he writes, 'being in time past alienated, and enemies in your mind in your evil works.' Alienated, separate, strangers, enemies! No words could more vividly set forth a complete severance. And the estrangement is mutual. Sin alienates man from God, but it also alienates God from man. It grieves God, it offends God, it alienates God. If God were not so grieved and offended and alienated, He would not be the Holy and Righteous God we know Him to be. Listen to words like these: 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.' 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' We must write a new Bible, we must for ever get rid of the words anger, wrath, consuming fire, from the descriptions of God's attitude towards men, if we are to maintain the position that alienation is only on one side.

And so, as the estrangement is twofold, the reconciliation must be twofold. Christ *reconciled man to God* by His Cross. In the Cross God stoops to the very death to rescue and serve those who had rebelled against Him. And the vision of that mighty love changes alienation and hate into passionate devotion. We are subdued, conquered, and won by the love of the Cross. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

¶ There is a story told of John Wesley, that one of his preachers by some action of his grievously offended him. Meeting this erring preacher one day, John Wesley asked him to apologize for his fault and beg his pardon. The man stubbornly and obstinately refused. 'Well,' said John Wesley, 'if you won't beg my pardon, I'll beg yours.' And at that the man broke into tears. That the man against whom he had sinned should stoop to this in his desire for peace, melted and conquered him.

But Christ also *reconciled God to man*. And this also He did 'by giving Himself a ransom.' That God Himself provided the ransom makes no difference to the fact that the ransom had to be paid before man could be set free. That God Himself was 'in Christ reconciling' makes no difference to the fact that the reconciliation had to be made before God could bestow on man His forgiving and restoring grace. And Christ, again, was the Middle-man. In the Cross He represented God to man, revealing Him as a God of infinite and uttermost love; in that same Cross He represented man to God; He offered to God the sacrifice of perfect obedience, and by bearing in His own Person the pain and penalty of sin, confessed in man's name that God's law was holy, just, and good.

¶ A picture was painted for the Royal Corps of Signals, depicting an incident during the Great War. A signaller unarmed, lying dead in No-man's-land, sent out to repair a cable snapped by shell-fire, sent out to restore the interrupted contact. The picture shows him lying dead in the fulfilment of his task, holding together in his stiffening hands the broken ends, holding them in contact. Beneath the picture is the one word 'Through!'[1]

2. Christ is *the Mediator between a man and his own conscience*. Sin does more than create a breach between man and God. It creates a breach between man and his own better and truer self. Sin means civil war, a divided and distracted heart; and a divided and distracted heart means misery and pain. Read the description of the civil war in that tragic seventh of Romans, with its record of inward conflict and pain. 'The good which I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise.' 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.' 'Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?' It is because sin inevitably means a discordant heart that the Bible utters that stern old word, 'There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.' That

[1] Hubert L. Simpson.

is not a threat, it is simply a statement of spiritual law. The sinner sins against his own best nature, and that is to lay up pain and misery for himself. But once again Jesus mediates between a man and his conscience. He blots out these sins that haunt us and terrify us. 'He gives the guilty conscience peace.' And then He reconciles a man with his better self. He sets him once again on the upward path. He sets a Zacchaeus on the path of self-sacrifice; and a Mary on the path of purity; and an Onesimus on the path of honest service.

3. Christ is *the great Mediator between man and man*. He has stood in many a gap in the course of the centuries and closed it up. He has mediated between individuals. What marvels of reconciliation He has accomplished! Think of this simple fact—simple but tremendous in its significance—in the circle of Christ's disciples there was at one and the same time Matthew the publican and Simon the zealot—Matthew the Jew, who had entered the pay of the Roman government; and Simon, to whom every such Jew was a renegade. But Christ laid one hand on Matthew and another on Simon, and in Him the Jewish patriot and the Roman servant became friends. And Christ has been Mediator between men sundered by antipathies as deep as those which separated Simon and Matthew. He is the Middle-man between men of differing tastes and classes and colours and tongues. A common love to Him unites them to one another. He has been doing this mighty mediating work, reconciling men to one another, all down the centuries. And when we think of the mighty achievements already wrought by Him, we can believe that before the end of the day all separations will be brought to an end, and brotherhood will become a blessed fact, and peace and goodwill our abiding possession.

¶ On the fateful day in August, 1914, before the ultimatum between England and Germany expired, Dr Henry Hodgkin of London was saying farewell to the German, Dr Siegmund-Schultze, in Cologne. As the two men were in the railway station, where troop train after troop train was pulling out, the German Christian said to the English Christian, 'Whatever may happen, nothing shall come between us.' It was the expression of a faith and a fellowship in Christ which united men of different nations beyond the ability of earthly governments to break.[1]

But the special message of the text for our modern world is that Christ has mediated among nations, and that in the long run all national jealousies and suspicions and hates will go down before Him. There is but one Mediator between nation and nation, and that is the man Christ Jesus; and He shall mediate until war shall no more be named amongst us.

When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

The Estimate of the Outsider

1 Tim. iii. 7.—'Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without.'

When St Paul, writing to Timothy, advises him to select for the office of 'bishop' one who, among other qualifications, 'must have a good report of them which are without,' he suggests an important and oft-neglected test of Christian character. We cannot afford to depreciate or ignore the estimate formed of us by those who have no association with the Christian Church.

1. Looking at the matter from the standpoint of the progress of religion in the world, the clear, definite type of the Christian character as set forth by individual members of the Church of Christ is of immense moment, when we remember that in every sphere of life the majority of people have little or no *personal* experience of the religion of Christ. Those who are 'without' may be active opponents of the truth, or they may be simply indifferent, or they may be keeping their minds in suspense. In any case, if they come to form respect and admiration for a true Christian, wherever he may be found, their testimony is all the more cogent by reason of the hostility or indifference or suspense out of which it has been created.

¶ Sir James Stephen was an avowed agnostic; but he confessed that no society of unbelievers would be able to produce the tone and temper of noble sanctity which he had come to admire

[1] *Religion and Life.*

and respect in the Christian character of Frederick Denison Maurice.

A man may be a model of all the Christian virtues in the eyes of the small religious coterie of which he is a shining light, yet to the world in general he may be extremely objectionable. We may make due allowance for the bias with which the world's verdict is weighted; still, a man may well examine himself if he discovers that his influence on those who are outside is next to nothing, whatever it may be within the Church. On the other hand, when the verdict of the world coincides with the verdict of the Church, he becomes a factor in the progress of religion.

It is folly to suggest that the outsider is not in a position to judge true Christianity. That is the view which Christ condemned, not only by His spoken words, but by the methods of His ministry. For He proved in scores of cases that the spirit of good was not dead in the churchless, the worldly minded, or the vicious. Under the influence of a Divine life and a divine sympathy the instincts of holiness revived in the sinner, and he stood on the threshold of the Kingdom of Heaven. We may take it for granted that the world is not so far alienated from God as to fail to recognize in the spiritually minded the divine impress.

When the worldly man secretly admires the Christian, envies his peace, covets his nobility, he condemns himself, and at the same time the latent divine life stirs within him. It is a humbling consideration to most Christians that they fail to evoke this responsiveness to the high and holy which lies hidden in so many careless hearts. We may protest that it is illogical for the crowd to form its judgment of Christianity from defective Christians. Doubtless it is so, but the fault does not lie solely with the crowd. The standard of judgment will alter when the reformation has begun from our side. It is obvious that immense impetus would be given to the energies of the Christian Church if those who are without could be led to admit that a rare and peculiar beauty shines in the Christian character.

¶ Religion really is not taught: it is caught from some one who has it already. And your duty and mine, if we want to make Christianity a more vital force in this country than it is now, is to show forth the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. An unbeliever once said: 'If the Christians I know looked a little more redeemed themselves, I could believe in their Redeemer.'[1]

Surely for our own generation the ethical test of the Apostle is not an anachronism. Never was there an age in which it was more necessary to insist that those who have passed through the spiritual experiences of conversion and regeneration should stand out with a certain distinction of character. There are some lines in Wordsworth's *Prelude* of which Coleridge remarked that he would have cried, 'Wordsworth!' if he had met them running wild in the deserts of Arabia. If we may compare great things with small, the Christian character must be instantly recognizable as unique, original, distinguished. The Christian is to be what Christ intended him to be, like 'a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.' He must tower, like Saul, above the crowd; but, unlike Saul, he must tower by virtue of his moral stature, beauty, and power. And wherever this nameless charm, this 'beauty of holiness,' this distinctiveness of Christlike qualities is marked, men will say—it is the only explanation possible to them—'This man is of that "city, which cometh down from God out of heaven."'

2. There is another standpoint from which we may view the estimate of the outsider; for the Apostle adds as a reason for his test, 'lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.' In other words, if the Christian, whether in official connexion or otherwise with the Christian Church, is badly reported of those who are without, it is not only a reproach to his religion, but it is a grave menace to his own spirituality. Failure to impress the outside world with the divinity of our character will sooner or later result in our taking the world's view of our religion, as a factor unreal and ineffectual in our moral being. No one goes down so quickly as the man who has lost caste. The penalty of a tarnished reputation is moral recklessness. When that mood settles down on the soul, Satan, the crafty hunter—so picturesquely limned for us by the Apostle's closing phrase—spreads his toils in anticipation of an easy prey. The verdict of those who are without reacts upon those who are within; and the hold we have on spiritual realities slowly relaxes under

[1] W. R. Inge.

the icy blast of contempt. The reproach of the outsider places in peril the soul of the Christian who has been a hearer, but not a doer, of the word; and it sooner or later reveals the foundation of sand on which he has built.

Hence the impression we leave upon others inevitably corresponds with the impression which Christ leaves upon us. If the impress of Christ upon our souls has been faint or fleeting, our character becomes a vague, ineffectual witness of His love. But, given

> the indubitable seal
> That ascertains the kingdom mine,

the influence of the Christian is cumulative, definite, assured. His growth in the knowledge of his Master is growth in the power of penetrating and uplifting the careless, hardened souls of men. He will make real to others the Master who is so real to himself. He will bring a new vision of Christ to many to whom Christ has only been a blurred, indistinct figure, hardly descried through the mists of their prejudice, self-will, and carelessness. 'The human lineaments' will 'shine irradiant with a light divine,' as on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the clouds vanished and the disciples beheld 'Jesus only.'

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH

1 Tim. iii. 15.—'The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.'

In speaking of the Church as the pillar and ground of the Truth St Paul has before his mind's eye the picture of a great temple, such as adorned the world of his day. In proceeding to build such a temple the builders began by preparing the ground, not simply by levelling it but by constructing a solid platform of stone, strong enough to bear the weight of the massive and glorious edifice to be reared upon it. The temple of Jupiter at Baalbeck, for example, rested on a platform of huge blocks some of which weigh as much as a thousand tons. The platform being thus prepared, the temple-builders proceeded to rear upon it rows of mighty pillars which upheld the temple roof. The pillars at Baalbeck are seventy feet in height surmounted by exquisitely carved capitals, each of them weighing a hundred tons. Thus the whole temple was firmly supported and adorned.

The Church, says St Paul, is the pillar and ground of the Truth. By 'the Truth,' of course, he means in a single word 'the Truth as it is in Jesus.' The whole manifestation of God in Christ is commonly spoken of in Scripture as the Truth, because it is the Truth of all truths, the Truth that saves, the Truth that has to do with the highest realities, the Truth which has supreme value and certainty because it rests not on dubious human speculation but comes by revelation from above. It is the light of life to all who will follow its guidance. It outshines all other truths as the sun in heaven outshines all lesser lights. Therefore is it rightly called by pre-eminence '*the* Truth.' Of this Divine Truth, according to the Apostle, the Church is the pillar and ground. It is the foundation upon which the Truth rests to provide a substantial foothold on the earth; it is the pillar on which the Truth is upheld. The Church underprops the Truth, and by means of its support the holy temple of the Divine revelation is upreared before the world and made illustrious in the eyes of men.

This beautiful image has much to teach us in regard to the due relation between the Church and the Truth of God. It suggests to us three things: first, that the Truth constitutes the Church; second, that the Church enshrines the Truth; and third, that the Church is a vital necessity if the Truth is to operate effectively for the salvation of the world.

1. *The Truth constitutes the Church.* The Divine revelation is primary; the Divine institution is ancillary. Here we touch on a subject of great historical interest, a subject about which volumes have been written and which is still a matter of controversy. What is the relation of the divine institution, the Church, to the Divine revelation which the Church proclaims? Is the Church's authority derived from the Truth she holds and preaches, or on the

other hand does the Truth preached derive its authority from the fact that the Church preaches it? The Jews of our Lord's day seem to have had some discussion of a similar kind as to where exactly the sanctity of the temple lay. To swear by the temple, they said, is nothing, but to swear by the gold of the temple is a binding oath; to swear by the altar is nothing, but to swear by the gift on the altar is a binding oath. But our Lord's judgment was that it is the temple which sanctifies the gold, and the altar which sanctifies the gift.

On the question of the due relation of the Church and the Truth, the Church of Rome comes down heavily on the side of the former. According to this view the Church as teacher of the Truth is greater than the Truth she teaches. She guarantees the Truth to be divine; she bids men accept it for true because she utters it, and so their faith ultimately rests upon her. Moreover the claim is made that the Church has a certain lordship over the Truth, that only part of it is written down in the New Testament and is to be supplemented by traditions that are the private possession of the Church. Consequently the Church has authority to add to and develop the Truth, so that, for example, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era the infallibility of the Pope and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary are added to the doctrines of the faith.

From this position the Reformers strongly resiled. They had asserted and maintained their liberty as Christian men, and they knew that it was the Truth that had made them free. It therefore seemed to them obvious that the Truth of God is the primary thing and must ever be held supreme. As the statue is greater than the pedestal and the light is more important than the lampstand, so the Divine revelation is greater than the Church which declares it. The Truth creates the Church, and not the Church the Truth. Before there could ever be a Church there must first of all be a revelation of God's saving grace. And the facts of that revelation *are* facts and stand eternally true quite apart from the testimony which the Church bears to them. The Church has no authority to alter the Truth or add to it one iota. A Divine revelation has been committed to her, the possession of which constitutes her a Divine institution, and she proves her faithfulness, she justifies her existence, only as she cherishes and upholds the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

While maintaining the primacy of the Divine revelation as constituting the Church we must, however, at the same time beware of falling into an excessive individualism. While we repudiate the extravagant and unscriptural claims which would exalt the Church above the Truth, we must not fail to accord to the Church her rightful place of honour and her due function in relation to the Truth. It has been an error and weakness of Protestantism, though not of the great Reformers, that the Church has been too lightly esteemed and her essential relation to the Truth obscured. There are Christians, rejoicing in their liberty as the children of God, who would say, 'We have our Bibles, we have freedom of access to God through Christ; what need have we of Church or priest or preacher?' It may be sufficient to ask in reply, 'Is not the Bible the gift of the Church to you, both in its origin as the Church's testimony and in its translation into your mother tongue? And while, doubtless, it is the Truth which saves, where would your knowledge of the Truth have been if there were no Church to utter it?' Which brings us to our second point.

2. *The Church enshrines the Truth.* St Paul speaks at times of the Divine revelation as a treasure which we have in earthen vessels, or a deposit to be guarded. He also speaks of the Church as the body of Christ. His meaning is that God in Christ has entered into human history, has 'tabernacled among men,' as St John puts it, and is working out through human agencies His gracious purpose of redemption. It is the same idea which the Apostle expresses in our text when he declares the Church to be the pillar and ground of the Truth. In the Church the Truth of God finds its earthly habitation; there it is enshrined as a Divine presence within a temple, making the sanctuary a most holy place.

We may legitimately distinguish between the 'pillar' and the 'ground' of the Truth. The Church as the ground of the Truth is that which gives to the Truth of God a solid foundation in history. This is a most distinctive and all-important fact. The Divine revelation of God in Christ is worlds away from those myths and legends which the heathen tell about their gods, and which are as vague and baseless as a fairy

tale. It is no mere poet's dream or castle in the clouds ; it has a firm foundation in historic fact. Philosophers have been prone to build their theories and systems upon pure logic and abstract thinking. Some have gone so far as to affirm that eternal truth could never be established by any event of history. And so their theories have floated in the air and, while presenting an impressive intellectual spectacle, have signally failed to come to earth and effectively influence the daily life of common folk.

In contrast to all that, our Christian faith rests on the firm ground of history. The Truth is not declared in abstract terms, but from of old God 'made known his *ways* unto Moses, his *acts* unto the children of Israel.' He thus revealed Himself as 'the living God,' and this revelation, historical from the first, came to its glorious climax in the Incarnation. In the fulness of time God's eternal Son appeared on the earth and patiently accomplished His redeeming work upon the field of history. The message of the gospel is no mere verbal message, but

> the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought.

And the Divine revelation thus given is continued and embodied in the Church which is 'the body of Christ.' How comes it that the word of the Truth of the gospel, spoken nineteen hundred years ago, has not by this time grown faint to our hearing and become to us merely an ancient tale ? The answer is, because in the Church the Truth has a firm foundation. There is something here that men can see and handle, as it were, and confidently rest their souls upon ; something not fanciful but real, no mere airy speculation but a Divine revelation based on the solid ground of history.

Further, the Church is the pillar as well as the ground of the Truth. As the pillars give stability and beauty to the temple, so it is the function of the Church to uphold and to adorn the Truth. In the Book of Revelation the seven churches of Asia are spoken of as 'the seven golden candlesticks.' They were set in the thick darkness of the old heathen world to hold aloft the light of God's holy truth so that it might shine far and wide through the dark. If they should fail in that essential duty they would cease to be the Church and the candlestick would be removed out of its place. To His first disciples, and to the Church throughout the ages, our Lord's word is, 'Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Manifestly then it is the chief business of the Church to uphold and proclaim the Truth, to make the Truth conspicuous, to 'placard' it before men's eyes, as St Paul says, so that none may be left in ignorance of it. Also, like the pillars which adorn as well as support the temple, it is the Church's function to make the Truth illustrious and beautiful, so that men may feel its attraction, may be led to desire it and to believe in it. And in fact, as a matter of history, the Church has been the chief agent in making known God's Truth to men down through the Christian ages. She has been beyond all comparison the great evangelist. No doubt the tides of her testimony have ebbed and flowed, enthusiasts have been chilled by her coldness and languor, earnest men have at times turned their back upon her as unfaithful, and her witness has been gravely weakened by her manifold imperfections and divisions. Nevertheless she has continued to stand up before the world like one of those ancient temple pillars which have defied the assaults of time. The simple fact of her continued existence, while kingdoms have risen and fallen, is the mightiest evidence of the Truth which she enshrines.

This work of uplifting the Truth and making it illustrious and credible to men is accomplished less by words than by deeds, less by the teaching of Christian doctrine than by the witness of Christian lives. St Paul enjoins slaves to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour' by honesty, obedience, and faithfulness in service ; old men by gravity and patience ; young men by their self-control ; women by their chastity and love of home and children. Such virtues have always been the finest witness to the Truth. Tertullian remarks that in his day none of the heathen troubled to read the Gospels for themselves but they judged of the Christian Faith by what they saw in the lives of the Christian men and women whom they met ; and the same is true to-day. Nor has this living witness ever been wholly wanting. For it may be confidently affirmed that what above all else has kept the Church alive throughout the ages and has upheld the

cause of God's Truth in the world is the fact that the Church has never failed to produce generation after generation of men and women in whose lives the Spirit of Christ was manifestly at work.

3. From all this it would appear that *the Church is a vital necessity* if the Truth of God is to operate effectively for the salvation of the world. The Church is the divinely appointed agent, and if it were removed or crippled in its activities, what other agent is there that could take its place? In our day the Church is lightly esteemed by many, and there are even Christian people so foolish as to disparage what they are pleased to call 'institutional religion' and to fondly dream of some form of spiritual religion which will need no embodiment in the Church. The fact is, as Canon Liddon has pointed out,[1] 'We Christians are too familiarized with the blessed presence of the Church to do justice to her as a world-embracing institution, and as the nurse and guardian of our moral and mental life.' Enemies of the Christian faith have been wiser in their generation. They have never made the mistake of ignoring or underestimating the Church. On the contrary they have recognized it as in very deed the pillar and ground of the Truth, and in their attempts to uproot the Truth they have directed their main assault against the Church. They have seen clearly that if they could but silence the Church the Truth would cease to be proclaimed, if the Church were disintegrated the Truth would presently fade away from men's minds.

The world crisis of to-day should surely open all our eyes to this. The troublers of the world's peace, the enemies of human liberty and justice and brotherhood are the declared enemies and persecutors of the Church, who aim at her total extinction. They hope thereby to obliterate the Truth of God and rule the nations by a doctrine of devils. And along with their bitter hostility to the Church they give us daily examples of how frightful a world it would be without the restraints and the inspiration of the Church. No more convincing evidence could be given of how vitally necessary the Church is to the peace and well-being of mankind. Our hope is that out of the present agony a new and better world-order will emerge. But let there be no mistake about this, no new order can bring enduring peace unless it is built upon the Truth of God of which Truth the Church is the pillar and ground. Those Divine principles of righteousness and mercy, of human love and brotherhood, which the Church is commissioned to uphold and to proclaim, are absolutely vital to the life of men and nations.

This momentous fact, which is revealed with startling clearness in the frightful struggles and agonies of our time, becomes a resounding call to all men of goodwill to rally to the support of the Church which enshrines God's Truth and is the main upholder of God's cause in the world. No doubt we are confident that 'the foundation of God standeth sure,' that the Church is built upon a rock and 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' But in the long history of the Church there have been tragedies, when the candlestick was removed out of its place, when mighty pillars of the Church have been laid low, when vast areas of Christendom have been overrun and devastated by Moslem or by heathen hordes. Where are the Churches of the Ancient East which once were the light of the world? And there are thoughtful observers of the world to-day whose considered judgment is that our western civilization is tottering on the brink of final ruin. No words could exaggerate the seriousness of the crisis. We are face to face with the possibility that, not merely the war, but the wild and brutal passions which the war has kindled and which will rage long after the war is over, may so far prevail as to desolate the nations and darken the whole future of mankind. To counter this devilish assault we need the most powerful rally of the Christian forces of the world. Too many have been hitherto content to enjoy the pleasant fruits of our Christian social order while doing little or nothing to uphold it. But now, in this so perilous a time, the call comes to every one of us to throw all our energy and enthusiasm on the side of God and goodness, to honour and uphold the Church which is the pillar and ground of the Truth, so that the Church, being invigorated in all her members and made beautiful by their Christlike living, may make her light so shine before men that God's way may be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations.

J. H. Morrison

[1] *The Divinity of our Lord*, 120.

The Secret of Godliness

1 Tim. iii. 16.—'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory' (R.V.).

King Lear, in his agony, says of his cruel daughter, 'Let them anatomize Regan and see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?' For there is a mystery in evil, an element of the unexplained; and men who are not ignorant of their own hearts are baffled sometimes in guessing at a motive which might account for the crimes which startle them. 'Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?' And at the other extreme of character, the Apostle says there is a mystery of godliness—though we are less curious as to it. We often acknowledge goodness as if it were nothing out of the common, and we do not consider that to account for that life full of comfort and of quietness, rich in love and good works, patient and cheerful and kind, there must be some noble secret. But Paul corrects the error, and with a kind of awe exclaims, 'Without contradiction the mystery of godliness is great.' Just as a scholar pores over a half obliterated inscription, in which the key to a forgotten civilization may be found, so does the Apostle with greedy interest look into this master secret of the life of man; and, after study, he declares that the hidden power which accounts for all true godliness is 'He who was manifest in the flesh.'

There is reason to believe that the passage is a quotation; and the common opinion is that we have here three couplets from a hymn, in which the power of Jesus Christ in the life of men is exhibited in successive contrasts.

1. The Son of God, who is the secret of godliness, is Himself One who, though manifested in flesh, was justified in spirit—that is, in His own spirit. He could review His life and say, 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?' And, at the end, He cried, 'It is finished,' for He saw no task undone.

That is, confessedly, a unique fact, for flesh and spirit in man have not kept pace. Our most valiant deeds exist in our imagination. The words which would achieve their purpose of consolation do not get spoken, and all our wittiest and most effective retorts come to us when the time is past. In every man there are dreams and determinations which are lofty, but in the process of translation into fact their wings are clipped. They may be no meaner than our neighbours', and they may even win some tribute of applause; but when we compare them in our hearts with the thing which we intended, we are ashamed to see how crippled and ineffectual they are. When a man is alive, and the world is great about him, and the sense of God is deep, he gets such views of what life was meant to be that all he attains looks paltry. He sees how every common task might grow to be a true divine service, how speech might be a means of grace and cheer; but when thought is turned to fact the glamour all has gone. And thus it is that, judging by any worthy standard, no man was ever able to justify himself in spirit; for that would mean that he had answered in every particular to God's thought of him.

So we are bound to pause with reverent amazement before the great fact which the first couplet expresses. God's eternal word—His inmost thought and meaning—was manifest in a human life; God's heart looked out through human eyes; God's wisdom spoke with human lips; God's untiring purpose of saving men was expressed in the life of One who Himself was weary as we are, and whose limbs flagged often. And in the depth of His spirit, where He realized the reason of His being in the world and all that hung upon Him, He was *justified*.

¶ J. H. Shorthouse, it was said, as a young man had doubts about the divinity of Christ. So he consulted a man not many years older than himself, the saintly Edward King, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln. King did not argue with him. He just gave him two pieces of paper, one plain and one black-edged, and told him to write on the first everything he had ever done which was absolutely good, with no admixture of evil, and on the other, all that he had done that was wrong. He said he did not ask to see either paper. A few days after Shorthouse came back to King. He said the black-edged paper was full, both sides, and could have been filled a score of times. On the other paper he had written the best and purest thing of his life, his love for his mother. But after a little thought he had crossed it out again. It was good, but not perfect. It had

been too often marred by selfishness, temper, forgetfulness. 'And what did you do then?' asked King. Shorthouse replied, 'I went down on my knees and thanked God I had a Saviour.' [1]

Paul says that the secret of godliness, wherever that is found, is Jesus Christ; and it is fitting that the first couplet should present Him in His character as the ideally good man, in whom the old antagonisms of flesh and spirit have disappeared. He undertook the common tasks; His business in the world was, first of all, to do the will of the Father. And if, at any time, we feel this common task impossible, and that for a man, with a man's body and appetites and weaknesses, to be holy is a dream, we need to recall the experience of the Man Christ Jesus. 'He suffered being tempted, and He is able to succour those who are tempted.' His victory is the promise of all victories; by His resistance He broke the sweep of the universal custom which had borne men on in evil ways, despairing of the good, and He created a new tradition. By His sacrifice He broke the pride of men, who love because He loved first. And thus by example, by influence, and by conquest He commands the hearts of men, who find in His obedience another world of possibility opening before them.

2. He was seen of angels—He was preached among the Gentiles. There are two revelations—to high and low, for, as Chrysostom nobly says, 'The angels along with us saw the Son of God, not having seen Him before.' Angels and men learned by the same events. The stainless sons of light, the high intelligences, the swift ministers of the will of God, had some new message borne in upon them by the Incarnation. That is a high region in which we cannot walk securely, but St Peter helps our thought when he speaks of the angels as stooping down to gaze at the mystery of the suffering of Jesus Christ. Those who never sinned and who know not of the strife of wills must stand outside, only guessing at the fitness which we acknowledge in Him who gave His life for us. When the Son of God emptied Himself and became a servant, what a mystery there was! and when He returned as a Captain of salvation, bringing with Him the first of a new world of ransomed men, how that mystery was justified.

In what way could the width of Christ's influence be expressed more arrestingly than in this couplet—a revelation to the angels, highest and purest of God's creatures, and a revelation in the same facts to the Gentiles, who were without God and without hope in the world? Throughout the ages He has remained central in all the contrasts and combinations of men. There is no possibility of growing past Him. At most we may grow up towards the point at which we begin to comprehend Him, and those who, standing highest, have least need, as it seems, of Christ the Saviour, would be the last to maintain that their need is little; whilst in others who have lived their life apart from Him, owning no lack, there are movements of return to Him who is in all and through all and over all. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, or, if you will, there are both Jew and Greek; angel and pagan, scholar and adventurer, the religious man and the frivolous and the profligate, are brought together for the same lesson, and they bow at His feet who rules as Lord from the Cross.

¶ For Richard Jefferies, that clean-souled Englishman, who, beyond all men of his time, saw 'the beauty of the land, the grandeur of the sea, the interest of life,' and wrote about them in his books, there came a day when another enchantment possessed him; and in pain of body he was content to turn back and forwards over the one Story in which a new sunlight is discovered.

To that love all men must be in debt. The world has nowhere in it a self-contained and self-sufficing virtue, and for high and low Paul's prayer is ever the same, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be your portion.' For he had learned that no life is so rich or so secure as that which owes everything to sources beyond itself. After the experience of nineteen centuries we can with even better confidence declare that the power of Christian character—what makes it clean and strong and kind—is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

3. Believed on in the world—received up in glory. Christ's influence persists though He Himself has passed from sight. Faith was raised to a new pitch of victorious confidence by what seemed likely to dash it to the ground, and that is not unreason, because there was not merely death for Jesus, there was exaltation at the right hand of God.

[1] Peter Green.

The fitness of this couplet in its place requires no demonstration. Christ can be understood as the secret power which accounts for godliness only when we remember the constraint of the spiritual things. If our world is wholly a world of sense, with nothing of the unseen at work within it, then our virtue will be altogether prudential and diplomatic; we shall be honest because that is the best policy, and, yielding to material threats, we shall bear or attempt nothing for an idea. A man living at that level may be a respectable citizen, but he knows nothing of the godliness which is animated and controlled by the powers of the unseen. It is not a paradox to say that Jesus came to His power only when He passed from sight. He had Himself anticipated such an exaltation, and said, 'When I am lifted out from the earth, I shall draw all men unto me.' The secret of godliness is that Jesus Christ, withdrawn, unseen, is Lord and Law-maker in all things, that every step may be taken in His strength, every moment regulated by His will, for to a believing man the unseen Christ has more reality and authority than any object which the sense reports. Living by faith in the Son of God, he goes about his work with his heart in company with Christ the Victor.

¶ Robert Louis Stevenson says of his father that he was 'a distinctly religious man but not a pious,' in which he strikes at a common weakness. His father, he felt, had too keen a sense of the tragedy of things, and lacked the alert composure of the truly pious man, in whose heart, above the confusion and dismay, the majesty of God, as the Disposer of all things, and the glory of the exalted Christ are ever clear.

A Plan for the Whole Way

1 Tim. iv. 7–10.—'But refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness; for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation. For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe' (R.V.).

When this letter was written speculations which Dr Moffatt calls the 'spawn of a Jewish and Gnostic syncretism' were troubling the churches. The primitive history of the Old Testament was overlaid with a mass of legends, especially the lives of its early heroes. The genealogies, preserved with such care, became the instruments of an absurd symbolism, which found secret meanings in the most simple strings of names. It was the system in vogue among certain teachers of commenting upon these things that is described as 'profane and old wives' fables,' and again as 'foolish questionings and genealogies.' This sort of teaching a manly and Christian common sense, applying itself to diligent study of the Scriptures in their moral massiveness and spiritual power, was to avoid. Associated with it was a certain form of asceticism which proclaimed the superior virtue of celibacy and of abstinence from certain kinds of food. Over against this the writer places a devout and rational view of the creation and of the hallowing power of its Christian use, a use marked by thanksgiving and prayer. The true teacher is to combat all the evil tendencies around him, by showing in his own person an example of genuine holiness, by a true pastoral care of those entrusted to him, by a courageous delivery of his message, and by the diligent cultivation of the Divine gifts imparted to him for his special work. Over against the negations of a false asceticism he is to set the positive truth of the all-embracing power of spiritual religion uttered in praise and prayer; over against the partial and temporary schemes of life, a scheme to embrace all life; in place of futile broodings and dreamings, a dynamic of efficiency and a means for the operation of God's power.

1. 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' Dr Moffatt's rendering is, 'Train for the religious life.' Godliness is regarded as a discipline, a scheme of self-education. As you train on the cinder-path for running, in the conservatoire for music, in the university for classics, in the machine shops for engineering, you can train yourself to piety. We suffer immeasurably from a kind of inverted spirituality that thinks nothing in religion of value that is not the outcome of a gust of emotion. Christians look not to the discipline of a well-ordered life, but to momentary starts of enthusiasm to do the work of religion. Devotion is not a habit with them but an impulse. They have not yet learned to yoke custom to piety. No one

expects to learn a science by a burst of enthusiasm for it lasting for weeks and followed by a period of missed classes and closed books. It is a path to be trodden for many a day with unfailing perseverance. And religion is a path. The early Christians were the people of the Way. To know Christ is to tread the Way.

'Bodily training is profitable for a little.' The writer is referring to the bodily austerities practised by those whose teaching he condemned, although the expression might equally well suit athletic training if the connexion permitted. He is not asserting the utter uselessness of these austerities. He knows better than that. There is place for a rational asceticism in the New Testament view of life. Self-mastery, if it is gained, is cheaply purchased by a little hardship. It is true that the whole of life is Religion's province, and true that all things belong to the full-orbed Christian experience. But there are lives that have lost the right to some forms of liberty and that must be content with a narrower range. For them many desires and impulses innocent in themselves must be sternly repressed. The writer admits a place for such training. There are circumstances where the lawful must be forgone; there are lives that have lost perfect liberty. And there are others who, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, for the sake of spiritual advance, have subjected themselves to extraordinary discipline.

Yet it is a victory that means removal from the lives of ordinary men with their common experiences and need of sympathy. The thoughts of ordinary men are not the ascetic's nor are their ways his ways. The writer will condemn no soul striving for victory over the temptations of the earthly nature, but his mind goes out with full approval only to the ideal which for us is enshrined in the words, 'Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' The other plan is provisional; this is eternal.

2. 'But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.' The permanent plan of life, the plan for the whole way, is godliness. This is the complete plan. It is not other-worldliness—it is the promise of the present. It is not secularity—it is the promise of the life to come. The true life is timeless. It is unaffected by change of circumstances save as these demand new expressions of it, and furnish new opportunities to it to show itself. The godly man is fitted for all environments and for every possible change. The note of his life is adequacy to the situation. A change in his position does not mean the ruin of his life-plan. He finds the scheme of things to which he is committed competent to stand the strain of changed circumstances. It is adequate to this life. It is adequate to the coming life. For in it all the conditions congenial to the godly heart, but which it does not find here, will come into play. The soul will find itself in its true climate; it will be at home.

¶ 'Lighting the grim and depressing fusillade of war reports,' writes an American minister, 'there is flashed to me a piece of news that has pierced the lurid clamour of the hour like a shaft of glory—"Sir Wilfred T. Grenfell died to-night." No, not so, that is but the routine phraseology of the Press. He could not die. He has only weighed anchor, as was his wont in days of stormy Labrador, and sailed his noble barque into those sunlit seas where the lilt and verve of his pioneering soul will be more at home.'

(1) Surely here we have the answer to the question, Is the Christian man's scheme of life to be drawn up with main reference to the present or the future? The Christian plan includes both. There is only one true life for men wherever lived. The life of which godliness has the promise is the life in Christ. Such a life undoubtedly makes the best of both worlds in the same sense that Jesus Christ did. The man who lives such a life will not act by two sets of principles in the two worlds. The life that he will live in the future will be the continuance, the development and expansion of the life lived here. It will not contradict it in any essential thing. It all turns on our interpretation of 'best.' It turns on whether or not, as Socrates in the Crito says, 'We should set the highest value, not on living, but on living well.' Socrates chose to die, and in throwing his life away, as Crito at first thought, made the best use of it. He followed conscience and God; he acted on principles which would stand good in whatever world he found himself. The promise is not of outward prosperity but of the blessedness of the true life, which stands good for time or eternity.

¶ It made no difference to Dr Wilson, whose

bones lie with his comrades in the ice and snow of the far South, whether he was pursuing his researches into phthisis in the London hospitals, surrounded by every scientific facility, or whether he was gathering fossils in the Antarctic regions. The spirit of the life was the same; merely the circumstances were changed.

(2) It is as much a falsity to contrast sacred and secular, as present and future. Many earnest souls who are impatient with the Church's attitude towards the social question can scarcely bear that she should devote herself in any degree to the work she has always put first of personal spiritual regeneration. On the other hand, we have the plaint from those who tremble for the spirituality of the Church if social regeneration is sought, who say that for the Christian Church to occupy itself with matters of subsistence and health, of work and wage, is to secularize its calling. Both have truth in what they affirm; error in what they deny! Piety is profitable for everything. It can enable the Christian to immerse himself in social reform and remain spiritual; it can enable him to be always true to the gospel of redemption and yet to face fearlessly the tasks which the working out of that gospel in all its ethical implications is thrusting on the Church. It is for the man who believes that true life is one, that we have it here and now in Christ, that the world's need is for it to be manifested, to go forward boldly to the work of showing the profitableness of godliness for the life that now is and the life that is to come.

3. 'Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation. For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God.' The hope of carrying out the Christian plan of life lies in this, that those who are working it out are in touch with the living God. It is because we have a God who is not a tradition but who lives in experience that we have any hope at all of the victory of Christ.

> No extramural God, the God within
> Alone gives aid to city charged with sin.

It is ours to proclaim and to live by a God near at hand. And gracious: 'Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.' To know Him as Saviour is to know Him in Christ. To know Him in justice only is not enough. Justice gives to each his own; but, as has been said, 'We need from God what is not our own.' The world needs a God who is a Saviour. Christ shows us such a One, sufficient for the lonely heart, sufficient for a universe. It is on Him that we have set our hope, our hope that in countless single lives He will be seen; our hope that the Church will arise and put on the beautiful garments of saving ministry; our hope that righteousness will yet run down the streets like a river. The dynamic of all Christian achievement is the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.

The channels of His working are made by faith. He does mighty things for all men—believing and unbelieving; but the opportunity for His power to work is given by faith. Unfaith hampers and restricts the Divine energy. It narrows the Divine blessing. In the provision of grace, in the heart of God limitless possibilities reside; as faith goes out they become facts; dreams become deeds.

This is the New Testament plan of life—godliness. It is all comprehensive. It needs no revision. It is for health, for wealth, for prosperity, for sickness, for trouble, for death, for time, for eternity. It has the promise of the present life and of the life to come.

Contemporary Faith

1 Tim. iv. 10.—'We trust in the living God.'

This is the faith of the Christian Church and also of the human soul. But it is apt to be denied from two opposite quarters.

First, it is denied by those who are not believers. They have reasoned that as the microscope reveals no Deity in matter, and the telescope does not find Him in the heavens, He is nowhere; or they have been so puzzled by the anomalies and contradictions of life that they have not been able to accept the idea of any moral controlling will. For one reason or another a number of quite honest people have concluded that we cannot get behind the phenomena of the universe, and that if we did we should not find that intelligent mind and personal will which represents the idea of God. They cannot trust in the living God, because

there is no convincing proof of His existence. With this attitude of intellectual agnosticism we have nothing to do on this occasion.

The second person who denies the idea of the living God is an earnest believer, and his denial is not a theory but a practice. He believes firmly that the universe has had its Creator, the human race its Ruler, and the soul its Saviour, but his faith is couched in the past tense. God lived once without doubt, but, and here faith passes unconsciously into unbelief, the same person does not believe with unrestricted mind in the living God of the present, guiding nations now as surely as He guided Israel in the days of the prophets, doing wonders now as in the days of the apostles, speaking to men now as He spoke when the books of the Bible were being formed, visible to those who have eyes to see, and audible to those who have ears to hear. Many a devout person recoils from the thought that God still works as in the former days. If he desires to know what God's mind is he betakes himself to the voices of Hebrew writers: God in that past is clear and active, in this present He is silent and ineffective. And this seems a reverent and devout faith. Is it not really an insidious and enfeebling form of religious unbelief?

1. Can God be living if He has ceased to speak and to act? Can one conceive a God who is indifferent? If He be God in the robust sense in which the Hebrew prophets believed when they made their triumphant comparisons between the living God of Israel, and the idols of the heathen, or in the more intimate sense in which Jesus spoke of His Heavenly Father, then His Spirit is still guiding man as He guided the apostles and prophets, and He is still moving down the paths of present-day history as the ark led the children of Israel. It is thinkable, though less than reasonable, to deny God altogether; it is neither thinkable nor reasonable to affirm a living God up to the year A.D. 100 and then to imagine Him henceforward handless and speechless.

¶ There have been famous English writers who systematically made use of history to emphasize the poverty of the present. 'We are selfish men,' cries Wordsworth, and he calls upon Milton to 'return to us again, and give us manners, virtue, freedom, power,' as if these had all become things of the past. Froude saw manhood and capacity complete in the England of Elizabeth. And Carlyle, says F. D. Maurice, 'believed in a God who lived till the death of Oliver Cromwell.'

2. When we say that, we do not deny that there have been certain periods of unique spiritual receptivity when elect souls came into the secret of God, and became the medium of radiant revelation. There was a century before Christ at Athens when art, literature, philosophy, and politics touched their zenith. Never again have we had architecture like that of the Acropolis, or statuary like that of Phidias; no dramatist has risen to be compared with Sophocles, no statesman rivals Pericles. The Jewish people had a genius for religion as the Greeks had for art, and the flower of their race became the ambassadors of God, bringing to their high office qualities which in the case, say, of Isaiah and St. John have never been equalled. Their writings, and above all the words of that Chief Prophet in whom this line culminated, will ever remain an inspiration for religion. Outside that line, however, one must believe that God spoke in the ancient time by such prophets as Plato and Confucius, according to their measure, and that in later days God had spoken by Augustine and Clement, by Luther and Calvin, by à Kempis and John Bunyan.

Again, one remembers that there was a brief three years when God wrought visibly in human life as He never did before, and never has done since. But it must be added that God wrought by the hands of Moses and Samuel before Christ came, and that God has been working in the ages since Christ left, and that, always excepting Christ's own life, the things done outside the Bible record have been more wonderful than the things contained therein.

When one desires an illustration of judgment to prove the moral government of God he can find it, not only in the decay of the Jewish State, but in the decadence of Rome, in the humiliation of Spain, in the horrors of the French Revolution. No man may belittle the Hebrew prophets as leaders of men and judges of righteousness, but they are not the only men whom God has called. If Elijah held the pass for his people, Knox bore himself bravely for Scotland; and no one would contend that John the Baptist accomplished more for Judah than John Wesley for England. One may hazard the guess that

Xavier has had more souls for his reward than that gracious prophet Hosea. God's hand had not been shortened that it could not save, His ear had not been heavy that it could not hear during all ages.

3. It is open to say that it would have been much easier to find God in the ancient times. But one does not gather from history that people had a keener sense of God in those Bible days. Isaiah's generation believed in the God who brought their fathers out of Egypt and who shepherded the patriarchs; but they did not believe in the God of Isaiah. Contemporaries no more accepted the prophetship of Isaiah than Bunyan's fellow-countrymen acknowledged his message. The generation of Jesus believed firmly in God, but He was not the Father from whom Jesus had come. When Jesus claimed to speak for God, they considered Him a blasphemer, and when they heard the voice of God in their synagogues they denied it. If any one wished to know God he must listen to Moses and the prophets. For now, after having been in their own day misunderstood and put to death, the prophets are accepted as the servants of God. God's operations were put back several centuries so that it was piety to hold that God was speaking in the fourth century before Christ, but blasphemy that Jesus represented God as surely as Isaiah.

Are we not also, as much as the Pharisees, hindered by our timidity in recognizing God outside Bible history, and by our want of spiritual discernment in contemporary life. We celebrate a Jewish Providence lavishly, we hesitate to identify an English Providence, and hence spring two evils.

One is the divorce between faith and politics, which was not the habit of the best men of Israel, nor in the great days of English history. But to-day not only does no one refer to God in arguing the affairs of the nation, but what is far more important, it is not the custom to think of God.

¶ In Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address it is significant, as Dr Barton tells us, that in the five or six extant copies of that address of which we have records two words do not appear. In all of the stenographic reports which appeared in the newspapers the day after the address these two words appear. The words are 'under God.'

When Lincoln stood up to deliver that immortal address the last phrases of it read like this: 'That this nation shall have a new birth of freedom.' But under the impact of that great solemn moment Lincoln added these two words: 'That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.'

After the same fashion we not only lose instruction as citizens of the commonwealth, but we also lose comfort in our daily life, because we are enslaved by this form of respectable unbelief. We are sure God spoke to Abraham, we are quite as sure He does not speak to us. As if He were not the same God and we have not as much need of His help! What relief from care, what deliverance from fear, what consolation in sorrow, what light in darkness, would come to our soul if we in this year of our Lord could only muster up enough courage to believe that we are as dear to God as any Hebrew patriarch or prophet, and that there is no work of God recorded in Holy Scripture which He will not abundantly perform for the humblest person who puts his trust in the living God.

The Gift of Youth

1 Tim. iv. 12.—'Let no man despise thy youth.'

The Apostle is instructing Timothy in his behaviour towards the people, how he is to teach and rule and make full proof of his ministry. He is anxious to brace him up to his high task, to make him assume the authority of truth and command the respect of the people. But the way he is to command this respect is not by insisting on the authority of his office, not by arrogance of manner, or any sort of self-assertion, but by making his influence so true and potent that all will be compelled to acknowledge his claims as a teacher. The authority which depends merely on an office, on what we call 'the cloth' speaking of the clergy, is a very poor sort of authority at the best. It is moral influence to which the Apostle here points. To gain and hold real respect Timothy is to make himself an example. He is to win his place of authority by his character, and faith, and zeal, and determination, and good works. 'Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample

to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity.' His Christian character and Christian conduct are to impress themselves so persuasively that men will forget the things that might prejudice them against his message, will forget that he is young.

1. It is not always easy for men to forget that another who assumes the right to teach, or who advances anything original, or who is zealous over some reform, is young. The words which Dr Johnson put into the mouth of Pitt in defending himself against 'the atrocious crime of being a young man,' describe the situation for many another besides Pitt. The despising may be done with a look which says plainly 'You are very young,' as the supreme and clenching argument, or which says in the presence of enthusiasm and fervid zeal, 'When you are old you will take things more calmly.' That is too true; and indeed it constitutes the great and magnificent quality of youth that it can glow and blaze. It is a very commonplace thought after all that when men are old they will take things more calmly, meaning only that the fires will have burned low. Cynicism is a poor exchange for enthusiasm. There are many and manifest temptations of youth, such as rashness, both of judgment and of conduct, hotheadedness, unbalanced zeal, but these are all the extravagances of what is its finest quality. The world needs the strong hopefulness and buoyancy of youth, as well as the large experience and cautious wisdom of age. Youth is the motive power of the world, driving it to new ends, and bringing to it new hopes.

Poets and romancers sing the praises of youth, but often only for its capacity of joy, as a wonderful time of abounding energy and fresh optimism, a time of joy and hope and strength. Older men will sometimes envy youth because of this, not for its opportunity but for its capacity for enjoyment. Even for that it is not to be despised. The pleasures of health and strength, the first delight in the world of Nature; the pleasures of friendship, meeting in the fresh glow of loyal feeling without suspicion, without self-interest, without considering motives, without thought of anything but sympathy, and kindness, and goodwill; the pleasures of acquiring knowledge, of finding new intellectual interests; the pleasures of beginning work, of entering on a definite pursuit; the pleasures of acknowledging greatness in others, ungrudgingly admiring and loving some without thought of jealousy or envy or meanness—all these and others have surely been the portion in some degree of all who remember their youth.

2. It is on looking back on youth that we see how blessed it is or might have been. When we are in it we cannot estimate its full value. Thus youth is inclined to look to the future for its great moments, going on in imagination to some distant time for the best things, except in the season of absolute gaiety and light-hearted happiness with the present. On looking back we see what usually was forgotten, namely, not only the great gift youth is, but also the great responsibility, the wonderful opportunity of that wonderful time of joy and hope. Thus, far worse than letting men despise thy youth is it to despise your own youth; and that can be easily done by neglecting the opportunities which make it the most solemn as well as the gladdest time of life. What ways youth has of despising itself and giving excuse for others to despise it also! To take this great gift thoughtlessly and selfishly, merely as a gift, with no thought of it as an opportunity, to accept the privilege with no sense of responsibility, is really to despise it and to make it also despicable. To look upon it merely as a time of enjoyment and never as a time of preparation—that is to throw away the boon and despise it as worthless. No contempt of others can equal that self-contempt.

¶ It was Robert Burns who sighed:

O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!

(1) The first great temptation of youth is the reckless prodigality of itself. In youth we look upon health as measureless, and time as boundless, and our opportunities as limitless. We do not look upon life as a whole, the future of which will be conditioned by how we treat the present. Many a man afterwards has to lament the waste of his powers, and all his life long has to combat habits acquired thoughtlessly, or has to toil terribly to make up for lost time. What stores of enthusiasm and energy and moral

passion are lost to the world because youth despises its best gifts, and squanders its powers in gay unconcern. If we do not learn self-control and industry and discipline of body and mind then, when can we do it? The loss to the world's best life is terrible, to say nothing of the loss to ourselves who might have been so different. Enjoyment may be the first word about youth, but the last word is *judgment*; and that should make it solemn as well as glad.

¶ Charles Dickens once received from an admirer of his writings a handsome centre-piece for the table with a design representing the Seasons. Winter, however, was omitted from the figures, as the donor shrank from including that sombre season in his gift to one with whom he associated so much that was bright. Pointing to it some time afterwards, Dickens remarked to a friend, 'I never look at it without being reminded most of the winter.'

(2) There is a more subtle way still of youth despising itself than the common, careless indifference, or the reckless prodigality which are its besetting temptations. It is by belittling its real greatness, by being half-ashamed of its high thoughts and noble passions and generous impulses. This self-pitying shame comes when the spirit of the world is allowed to play on us undisturbed. That spirit suggests that enthusiasm, and ardour, and high ideals are rather laughable things, at which every sensible man of the world smiles. These splendid visions are impracticable, the fruit of ignorance. When we are older we will know better and will accommodate ourselves to the hard facts of life. Older people often despise their youth by sneering at their past earnestness, and rather pride themselves on having at last learned prudence and worldly interest, and of being at last comfortably down on the common level in practice and custom and ways of thinking.

¶ 'Father!' said young Dr Ralph Dexter to the old doctor in *The Spinner in the Sun*, 'father! it may be because I'm young, but I hold before me, very strongly, the ideals of our profession. It seems to me a very beautiful and wonderful life that is opening up before me, always to help, to give, to heal. I feel as though I had been dedicated to some sacred calling, some life-long service. And service means brotherhood.'

'*You'll get over that!*' returned the old doctor curtly, yet not without a certain secret admiration. '*You'll get over that* when you've had to engage a lawyer to collect your modest wages for your uplifting work, the healed not being sufficiently grateful to pay the healer. When you've gone ten miles in the dead of winter, at midnight, to take a pin out of a squalling baby's back, why, you may change your mind!'

And later on in the same story Myrtle Reed gives us another dialogue between the two doctors.

'I may be wrong,' remarked Ralph, 'but I've always believed that nothing is so bad that it can't be made better.'

'The unfailing earmark of youth,' the old man replies; '*you'll get over that!*'[1]

The world and the Church look to the young for the visions that keep us from sordid acquiescence in the commonplace and the accepted. It is an irreparable loss to both when these visions fail, when youth becomes prosaic and uninspiring, when the ideal loses its currency among us, when the young cease to picture the perfect state both for self and for society. It always means a relaxing of the vital hold of religion over the community. It is the dying out of faith in God. One of the main functions of religion is to keep before us the ideal; and the young who see visions are a natural channel of its working. Despise not your youth in its best aspect. Keep your visions; correct them by the mind of Christ. As He knocks at the door of your heart, offering you not merely a state of blessedness, but a *career of service*, open to Him willingly. He will inspire passion in you, and will regulate it; and will set you to your work in the world for Him and for the brethren.

A Debt to be Repaid

1 Tim. v. 4.—'But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.'

The text speaks of the relations of young men and women to their parents—to their home—as one of requital, which seems to imply that they have contracted a debt which requires to be repaid, and we shall consider, first, *the debt*; and second, *the repayment*.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mushrooms on the Moor*, 244.

1. *The Debt.*—When we begin to think for ourselves we become aware that we owe a heavy debt, because others have been thinking of us before we could think about them. We come into a made world, and all who have made it what it is have laid us under obligation. The examples which inspire us, the institutions which foster us, the lights which illuminate our path, were all there before we came. Generations have toiled, and we have entered into their labours. And the more a man knows of history, the more conscious he is of the extent of the debt which he owes. The very least that any one owes to his parents is that they have given him his existence, and this includes all the possibilities of time and of eternity. There are indeed pessimists who profess to believe existence itself an evil, but as they do not commit suicide we need not take them too seriously. A healthy man is glad that he has been born. To him this is a glorious world and time an ample heritage, and the more any man has this healthy feeling the more does he feel what he owes to those from whom he has derived his existence.

It is not merely our being that we owe to those who have brought us into the world. They have toiled for our well-being. What anxiety there has been for us in sickness! What prayers have been poured out on our behalf! What schemes have been discussed for our future! A man requires to be a father himself, and to see with a mature eye the indescribable feelings and love of a mother, fully to realize how much he owes to those who performed the same office for him.

¶ 'Only a short time ago,' writes Dr Gossip, 'I was shown an old bundle of letters faded with age in which a mother—long dead now—set down all her longings for her wonderful baby boy; and as I read, my soul blushed red. Because the writer was my mother, and the baby boy was I.'

But the greatest heritage which parents can bequeath, or children receive, is that of a spotless name. There are many who can think with pride that they have inherited that from more than one generation. Their forebears have been upright, temperate, God-fearing; perhaps they have been deeply religious and adorned with the beauty of holiness. If so, goodness ought to be easy to them, and the maxim *noblesse oblige* applies in their case. Such an example binds them to a life like that.

This is what the text means when it says that children should show piety at home. In our speech 'piety' means a certain sentiment towards God, but in ancient languages 'piety' was a sentiment rather towards parents. For instance, the pious Æneas of Virgil's verse is not the religious Æneas, but the affectionate son who carried his aged father on his back out of the flames of Troy. In China many ideas appear in a strange topsy-turvy form, and it is said that when a man is ennobled there for benefits which he has conferred on the State his dignity does not descend, as with us, to his descendants, but ascends to his forebears; his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and the rest are ennobled. That strikes us at first as queer, but it is a striking testimony to the fact that, when a man is capable of doing anything of worth to the city and the State, it is due probably not so much to himself as to the home that has produced him. There has been there an evolution of goodness through generations which in him come to full expression, as some shrub flowers once in a hundred years.

2. *The Repayment.*—Let us look now at the repayment of this debt. In what coin is it to be repaid? Well, first, there is the requital of love. It is through love that we receive all the benefits our parents confer on us, and love is not to be repaid in any coin baser than itself. What is lacking in many of our homes is not so much the reality of requital as just the dash of sentiment which would give it grace. Sons in our homes are apt to wrap themselves up in a taciturnity which is a constant trial to the gentle souls of the home, whereas a little frankness and sociability would make a world of difference. It is a discourteous thing to take one's food in silence when there are others at the table who are ready for conversation, and it is still worse to defend oneself behind a newspaper or a book. No one would ever think of doing that at any other table except that of his own home, but there are those who reserve all their manners for strangers, and turn to their flesh and blood only their silent and uncouth side. He who is a gentleman, however, is a gentleman first at home, and if he is courteous to others, he is not more courteous to them than he is to his own folk.

¶ 'Hazlitt,' says his biographer, 'was once glad enough of the shelter of his father's house at Wem, but when he moved from home he never once traced a line to his aged father nor sent a letter to his mother and sister. When his father died, his eloquent son was not by his side, nor was his address known at the time.'

Then, secondly, the debt of home ought to be paid in obedience. There are, it is true, limits to obedience. The obedience of the very young is unlimited. Parents are entitled to command what they choose, and children are bound to obey without asking questions; but as time goes on and the mind grows and expands, sons and daughters are entitled to have the commands given them explained, and it is their right by degrees to judge and choose for themselves. It is the duty of parents to train them to be able thus to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. That is just where some parents go wrong. They try to keep their children children a little longer than they ought. A father will so absorb the business that his sons grow up nonentities because they have never had any responsibility put on their own shoulders. A mother will do the work of the home so perfectly and exhaustively that her daughters have no chance of learning housekeeping. But, on the other hand, there is also the danger of the young prematurely laying hold of their independence. 'In great states,' says Ruskin, 'in great states children are always trying to remain children, and parents are wanting to make them men and women. In vile states the children are always wanting to be men and women and the parents trying to keep them children still.'

Then the debt of home may have to be paid in hard cash. It is to this very prosaic side of the subject that the text refers. In the Apostolic Church there sprang up out of its abundant charity a noble system of poor relief, and the primary objects were widows. But it was found that some who had widows for their mothers or grandmothers handed them over to the charity of the Church when they were quite able to support them themselves. The Apostle protests against this, arguing that they have been relieved from natural duties by joining the Christian Church, and waxing hot on the subject he declares that, if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. Now that holds good in all generations. It was applied here to widows, but it may also apply to other poor relatives. To what degree of relationship responsibility extends it may not be easy to say. That has to be left to every man's conscience, but there can be no doubt as to the duty of children and of grandchildren. This may sometimes involve self-denial, but it is self-denial which will be amply repaid. There are many men whose greatest satisfaction in life has been just this power and privilege of supporting their parents in old age.

And, lastly, the debt of home may be repaid in honour. There are many homes where the parents have no need of the money of their children, or of the things which money can buy, because they have themselves abundance of this world's goods, but all the more there should the debt of honour not remain unpaid. The best way in which sons and daughters can honour their parents is by doing all honour to them. Every son when he goes away from home carries with him the honour of the home to which he belongs, and he may either enhance or degrade it. If he does well his success is doubled, for it is not only a credit to himself but a crown of honour to his parents. On the field of battle this has often been the inspiration of courage, and in the battles of life there are multitudes doing their best, living laborious days, shaking off the tempter, and keeping straight in the middle of the narrow way, for the sake of those far off whose hearts will be cheered by their well-doing, and would be broken by their ill-doing.

¶ 'When you go home will you do something for me, Padre?' asked a dying lad on one of the Flanders' fields of battle. 'Certainly, my boy, what is it?' replied the chaplain. Slowly drawing a ring from his finger he said in faltering tones: 'My mother gave me this ring to remind me that every time I looked at it she would be praying God for strength to help me to keep straight. Will you give it to her, Padre, and tell her that I have been greatly helped to keep straight?'

Health and Religion

1 Tim. v. 23.—'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake.'

St Paul is represented in this passage as warning a younger colleague against rash and one-sided judgment of character. Part of the work of Timothy was to superintend a number of churches in his diocese or circle. He had to select the proper men for various departments and to see that they did their work. That choice of associates is an extremely responsible and delicate business. One feature of a great leader's power is insight into character, his ability to choose men who will work under him and with him. 'I adjure you,' says the Apostle, 'I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is a solemn warning to avoid prejudice and partiality—'lay hands suddenly on no man,' 'without preferring one before another,' do not be carried away by first impressions, do not be in a hurry to make up your mind about a person; be very careful. 'Neither be partakers of other men's sins,' lest you share the responsibility of the mistakes they make and the mischief they do. 'Keep thyself pure,' keep your own life free from bias in the exercise of your judgment. It is to enforce the need of this that the word about health comes in. The young man is told to attend to his physical condition: 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine other infirmities'—which really means, according to the original Greek, give up being a total abstainer; if you are a total abstainer stop that for a while, take a little wine, you need it; keep yourself in form. Time has changed, and many a person requires to do the opposite, to give up taking much wine or any wine, for the sake of his infirmity.

1. Health has a very great deal to do with our management of life, our own and other people's. Undue strain tells upon the physique even of the strongest, and Timothy, who apparently was not particularly robust, is sensibly advised by Paul to look after his physical health, because any chronic indisposition would impair or handicap his powers of dealing with the situation; it might make him peevish or hasty and thereby warp his judgment.

Timothy was a young man, and youth is proverbially reckless about health. When we are young we assume that we have got health, as we have got time, before us and we often make extravagant demands on our bank of health. We show proper scorn for anybody who is nervous about our physical condition; and that is all to the good. At the same time, if people presume upon their robust constitution the penalty is exacted before very long. Any rashness will bring a weakening and crippling of power sooner or later. Youth, by over-strain, by carelessness of the body, frequently lays the seed of insidious disease in after-life. Many of us suffer from weak hearts, defective eyesight, impaired digestion, crippling of the whole of our powers, simply because we were utterly reckless of them when we were young and, living possibly for high ends, neglected the care of the body with which God has entrusted us.

2. There are people who, whatever their aims, should be warned about the far-spreading mischief wrought by poor health; a mischief that may fall short of any actual breakdown in the system but that bears upon our happiness and effectiveness.

(1) The first line of mischief wrought by ill-health lies *in relation to other people.* That is the Apostle's point. When for the first time Voltaire met Frederick the Great he says: 'When you meet a man like Frederick the Great you ought to be in first-class physical condition,' as for this interview he required to have his full powers of body. There are many cases in life in which to deal with them properly you must be in first-rate physical condition. Any one knows that with certain forms of disease, and especially those that affect the nervous and digestive systems, the brain is apt to be clouded. No one who has read with any attention Carlyle's life will be disposed to ignore the ill-effects of dyspepsia. It is a disease that gets into the judgment, makes a man irritable, and in many ways prevents him from seeing the conduct of other people in its true light. We often take morbid and false views for the moment of our associates, attribute wrong motives to them, and misconstrue their actions, not from any deliberate prejudice against them, but owing to the fact that our practical judgment has been upset by some physical disturbance.

No one would dream of arguing that a robust body and steady nerves of themselves will lead to right discrimination. Mere health will not make for practical judgment. But how very few of us with any experience of life will deny that when people get out of sorts and permit physical exhaustion to affect their nerves, their judgments of others are apt to become rather unreliable and as a rule uncharitable. They are overstrained and run down, they cannot throw things off as they once did, they get excited and easily depressed, they feel aggrieved, and they will brood over some imaginary insult that no person ever meant to offer. The cheerful, serene attitude of a man, with the inevitable worry of his profession, becomes impaired by certain ailments and everything and everybody around him suffer in consequence. Indisposition leads people to be either sharp in forming and expressing judgment or rash in accepting somebody else's estimate. It makes it harder for them to be genial, loyal, and just in their dealings with their fellows.

¶ Erasmus was a delicate man, and Montaigne, and Heine: yet it remains true that the great men even in the pure work of imagination and the spirit, Shakespeare, Dante, Scott, affect us as healthy men. Goethe's great work *Faust* came from a man who had reached a certain quietness and strength of physical life, whereas his *Werther* is the work of a nervous and unsettled temperament.

'Illness,' said Samuel Johnson, 'makes a man a scoundrel': referring, I have no doubt, to the peevishness and irritation and violence which are apt to settle down upon people who are not ill enough to be patient, but just ill enough to be ill-natured.[1]

That is what Paul is pleading for—attention to the laws of health, in the interests of our work and home, and business, and church, where so much of our duty lies in the proper management and estimating of one another. If any one, like Timothy, finds himself or herself less physically fit than they should be, then he or she is bound to take notice of the symptoms and to employ every reasonable precaution against a state of health that impairs the quality of one's work. Things like food, fresh air, exercise, and sleep are not too small to be considered in their bearings upon our religion, because they help the body to answer the higher call of the spirit.

(2) The other line of mischief wrought by ill-health is *an undue absorption in oneself*. Bodily ailments do react upon our moral and religious life. People who allow themselves to drift into chronic indisposition are in danger of too narrow contact with life, and their undertakings suffer from it. If they are always thinking about themselves their preoccupation tends to drive them inward and to restrict the range of their influence. As Amiel, the Frenchman, once put it: 'Our dependence upon surrounding circumstances increases with our own physical weakness and, on the other hand, in health there is liberty.' Health is the first of all liberties. There are, and have been, magnificent examples of people who have triumphed over physical disabilities, men and women who have maintained unselfish interest and aims in spite of some bodily handicap. The sickly frame in their case has been made a moral opportunity. But what Paul is urging here is the folly of incurring these handicaps lightly, or of treating them lightly when they are incurred.

¶ Harold Anson, in a brief review of the life and work of Miss Lily Dougall, speaks of the great interest she took in the 'Guild of Health,' and goes on to say: 'She felt intensely that Our Lord believed in bodily health as being no enemy to the health of the Spirit, that He regarded illness as "a work of the devil" that He was manifested to destroy, and that a great part of His personal work and of His charge to His followers was concerned with the restoration of health to the body. She was, therefore, continually at issue with those who taught that the life of saintliness involved or was aided by the disharmony of the body. If it were pointed out to her that this or that Saint was continually ill, she would reply, "Yes, and see how narrow-minded he was, in spite of his goodness, how intolerant, how absorbed in his own difficulties. How much more wide-minded, how much more useful to us to-day, would he have been if he had been free from this absorption in bodily pain, with its consequent irritability and self-pity."'[1]

A sensible attention to the details of health is a religious duty, and for the sake of our work we must learn to regulate our physical habits, to manage our body, to keep it in proper train for the due service of God and man by attending to

[1] J. A. Hutton.

[1] *Great Christians*, 201.

things which are apparently rather trivial and beneath the notice of highly spiritual persons. They are not trivial; they determine the character and the balance of our life.

Very few people will deny that recreation, food, sleep, do bear upon the peace and the success of human life, because human life largely depends upon our power of judgment and self-control, upon the ability to weigh things patiently and fairly, upon the power of judging every case on its own merits, avoiding anything like favouritism, keeping our judgments of people sound and steady. For the sake of ourselves and others, for the sake of the God whom we seek to serve, we should welcome every opportunity of reminding ourselves that we cannot afford to neglect any precaution against the sullen or the quick temper, the pitiless jealousy and the jaundiced judgment, which are often the result of physical exhaustion, physical carelessness.

'I lay this charge upon you, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,' says the Apostle. The range of religious duty covers even the honest care of our bodily health, and there must be in the Christian ethic a conscience for the body as well as for the soul.

Sins, Open and Concealed

1 Tim. v. 24.—'Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.'

1. The whole scheme of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which will remain for all time the most exacting and penetrating analysis of human sin, is based upon the principle that all sins are not equally heinous. Lest that principle of his should be misunderstood, it needs to be said that in Dante's scheme even the most delicate and intangible sin is dark enough to separate a man from God until it is repented of and forgiven. But the whole scheme, with its gradations, attributing to one sin a lesser consequence and an easier way of deliverance than he attributes to another, is very readily acceptable to our general moral sense. We know that amongst certain things that are bad the degree of badness may in one case be much deeper than in another. But our tendency is undoubtedly to attribute to sins which have a gross and public consequence the deepest heinousness. This is not necessarily a religious attitude at all. It may be largely physical—our instinctive repugnance, for example, at the disorderliness and offensiveness, say, of a tipsy man, or our terror at the sight of some loathsome disease which was the physical consequence of some practised iniquity.

It is a disturbing discovery for us to make—because it runs right in the teeth of that instinctive judgment of ours—that the great observers of the human soul are apt to attribute to these more gross and public sins a lesser degree of guilt than to sins in the human heart which for years and years, it may be so long as life lasts, give no public sign. In Dante's scheme, distinctions are drawn between sins of the flesh and sins of the mind; between what we would call sins of excess, the overflow of something which within bounds is not evil, and contrasting with these, sins of intention, deliberate, planned; between sins which a man commits in hot blood, and sins which he commits in cold blood. Indeed, all through Dante it would appear that the cooler the temperature of the sin, the darker and more diabolical it is. So that in his *Inferno* the sins of lust stand nearest to the surface and escape from hell, while as one descends that inverted pyramid of pain, the temperature becomes colder as we urge our way down through sins of mistake, down through sins of neglect, down through sins of deliberate intention, until we arrive at sins of treachery, treachery first to outsiders, as to the State, then treachery to friends, benefactors, until at last, in the centre and cockpit of hell, we come to the last post of human evil, where, in a lake of ice, the spirits are confined eternally which had it in them to be guilty of treachery against the Son of God.

¶ We judge of sins, as we judge of most things, by their outward form. We arrange the vices of our neighbours according to a scale which society has tacitly adopted, placing the more gross and public at the foot, the slightly less gross higher up, and then by some strange process the scale becomes obliterated. Finally it vanishes into space, leaving lengths of itself unexplored, its sins unnamed, unheeded, and unshunned. But we have no balance to weigh sins. Coarser and finer are but words of our own. The chances are, if anything, that the finer are the lower. The very fact that the

world sees the coarser sins so well is against the belief that they are the worst. The subtle and unseen sin, that sin in the part of the nature most near to the spiritual, ought to be more degrading than any other.[1]

2. Now all that profound insight of Dante may be put down to the man's genius. But it was an insight resting upon what Dante found in the very heart of the gospel. Writing in the age when he wrote, Dante's words would have meant nothing if they had not been perceived as reinforcing the underlying moral sentiment of the Christian faith.

But when we turn our eyes to the New Testament we encounter on every page in which our Lord is speaking or acting this very discrimination between sins, this confession that one thing is not as grievous as another, though all may be sad; that one thing done in certain circumstances may make an appeal for charity such as the same thing done in other circumstances may not make; that ignorance on the part of the offender may come in to qualify our judgment; or that it was a hot word, a hot blow. And, on the other hand, another sin that may seem to men of the world less heinous may, because of its own dark background, be like a jet from the very depths of the pit, so that in His view a man may only use his eyes and yet be guilty of a completed and irrevocable crime; or one may say a word which, except that he had not the courage or the opportunity, was the same as though he had put a man to death.

There is no doubt whatever that our Lord made this discrimination, which here we find St Paul repeating, that there are sins which are obvious, evident, their judgment open beforehand, gross, sensual; and there are others, hidden, more largely in the intellect, cold, calculated, careful, which may never give a sign, which may never embroil the life which conceals them in public consequences, concerning which both our Lord and His Apostle declared that their proper judgment nevertheless would overtake them inevitably at the judgment-bar of God.

¶ A man I know naïvely remarked that he never sinned. I suppose he meant that he never murdered anybody, nor got intoxicated, nor stole money from his father. Would that sins were always so patent as these! What of the spiritual meannesses which Christ condemned so much more mercilessly than He condemned sins of overt passion? The things which fell us are hypocrisy, white lies, insincerity, cruel thoughts, whispered stories of gossip, hard, biting criticism, jealous longings, pride, love of money, and rivalry of other people's wealth that we would hardly admit to ourselves, curiosity, sly, lustful looks, vanity, and the love of applause—all of them sins that we cherish behind an exterior so well manœuvred that no one would know we are not just as good as we look![1]

We know the tender compassion of our Lord towards one who was brought to Him by unfeeling critics who asked Him to condemn her; and how our Lord did not so much as lift His eyes lest doubtless He might add to her feeling of abjectness; how rather He kept looking at the ground, and, when He spoke, said something to the bystanders which troubled them so that they hastened away. Whereupon, looking at her now that she was sure of His justice, He said, 'Go, and sin no more.' And, it is the obstinate record that that woman became Mary, who, with His own mother, was last at the foot of the Cross, and was first at the sepulchre on Easter morning.

But we know, on the other hand, with what cold majesty our Lord confronted the merely subtle and cynical and calculating people of this world, the successive tyrants who batten on the superstition or the humility of men, the Herods, and the Pilates, and the Caiaphases, how He turned towards them a heart of steel.

There is a kind of sinning which even in this world, and soon or late, declares itself upon the housetops. Poverty, disorder, ill-health, loss of friends, and a thousand spectres of the mind it has already let loose upon the wretched victim. That is the kind of sin of which the Apostle here speaks when he says, 'There are sins whose judgment is open beforehand.' But there is a sinning of another kind, clever, careful, deeply planned, never too much at a time, defended, it may be, by hypocrisy, by religion, visited by no retributions at the hands of the world, though secretly cruel; rich in friends of a kind such as are apt to gather wherever the sun is shining; moving on, it may be, even to an apparently peaceful death.

[1] Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 44.

[1] S. M. Shoemaker, *Realizing Religion*, 32.

And yet, says the Apostle, in the very spirit of many a saying of his Master, that is a manner of sinning whose judgment is only lying in wait, to be pronounced in a kind of crash and illumination when the man stands without disguise at the bar of God.

'Two Worlds are Ours'

1 Tim. vi. 7.—'We brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out' (R.V.).

The text occurs in a passage relating to that Christian temper which refuses to attach more than their proper value to temporal possessions. It is obvious, says the writer, that we all came into this world empty-handed; and we are to understand that it was thus ordered by God so that we might sometimes look back to the condition of our arrival and then look forward to our departure, and consider that, when our time comes, we shall go forth from the world portionless once more, no matter how much wealth we have succeeded in amassing. It is plainly implied that there are two distinct worlds; and we are to reflect that we have to do with both of them.

As to our first appearance here, we are to think of ourselves as coming from another world into this. Then, after a longer or shorter stay here we return from this world to that. This present world is apt to claim us and to press upon us to such an extent that we are tempted to regard it as the only world we have to reckon with, and to live our lives here as though there were no question of entry and exit, but only of beginning and ending. But the Scripture says that we come in, and again we go out. The full story of our life is not bounded, therefore, by our birth and death. Birth is more than the emergence of a new life on earth. That other world is somehow concerned in it, in such a sense that we may be said to have come from that world. Death, again, is more than the unprofitable conclusion of the life we have lived upon earth. It is to be viewed as a departure, a going home, to the world from which we came out.

With regard to the statement that, in our coming and going alike, each one of us is found with empty hands, there is no disputing the fact, provided that we confine our attention to the worldly gear which the writer has in mind. Whatever provision may await us when we arrive, we ourselves have nothing to add to the store; and when at last we are called home, however many our goods, there is not an atom that will not slip through our fingers and pass to others. These things, therefore, will not be too greatly prized by an understanding man. They have to do with a part, but only a very small part, of our life; and both our origin and our destiny suggest the wisdom of practising a guarded and masterful use of possessions, and the cultivation of a spirit of detachment. This is possible because we do, in fact, bring in something of a different kind; and it is required of us because we are meant to carry out much, again of a different kind.

Here are four important matters, then, deserving closer inspection in order that we may clear our minds of doubts and confusions, and strengthen our determination to live 'soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.' There is our coming in, and our going out, our equipment in both cases, and our present use of the things of earth.

1. *Our Coming In.*—In what sense may each of us be said to have come in, when we were born? Are we to understand that God created a new soul in the place where His throne is set, and sent it down to earth to be united with the tiny body that men had prepared for it? It may be so. We do not know, though men have long debated the question. At least we must remember, if we hold this opinion, that it will never do to give God the credit for the soul, and man the credit for the body. The body no less than the soul is His handiwork. Perhaps the best we can do in attempting to state, though not to explain, the mystery, is to say that God commits to man the initiative in the creation of new lives, and matches the operation of human love (at many levels) with the exercise of His own creative love in such a way that the child that is born is both born of God and is at the same time in the line of life that stretches unbroken from life's first appearance on earth to the life that is in those who are directly responsible for the begetting of the child. He is related to all that went before him. In a sense he emerges out of the stream that now carries him on its bosom. But

in a truer sense he comes out from the hands of God, who has fashioned him and sent him from that world into this.

> From out what Silent Land
> I came, on Earth to stand
> And learn life's little art,
> Is not in me to say :
> I know I did not stray,—
> Was *sent* ; to come, my part.[1]

2. *Our Going Out.*—If men think thus about the beginning of a child's life, there can be no doubt about the meaning of death. 'The spirit returns unto God who gave it.' But if the child is regarded as merely the offspring of its parents, the consequences of death become an open question. Death may seem to them to be the destruction of the life that has flourished for a little while ; or they may be disposed to wonder whether, after all, a man's life may not be prolonged in some other state. The question perhaps arises in their minds, 'What is life for, if nothing remains for a man when he has run his all too short course here ? The scientists describe an evolutionary process taking place through an inconceivable length of time and finding its culmination in human beings. If men are so shortlived, why was so much trouble taken to produce them ? '

¶ 'It is an intolerable thought,' wrote Charles Darwin, 'that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation, after such long-continued slow progress.'

Others will consider the intellectual powers, the goodness and the moral worth, of some they have known, and will find themselves marvelling that these things, the most precious things life has to offer, should so easily be cancelled out. At times they will be heard to assert that there must surely be found some capacity of persistence, beyond death, in a personality that has obviously ripened to considerable power and represents the highest values we know.

¶ Professor Palmer of Harvard, when he recorded his wife's decease, said this : 'Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it, and not call the world irrational, if, out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter, it excludes so fair a spirit.'

To these, and to all other questioners, we Christians have a confident assurance to offer. Man does not wholly die, but goes out, at death, to that other world where the mystery of his life is hid with God. This we are able to declare with conviction, not as the balanced result of long and hard thinking about the possibilities that lie beyond death, but through revelation from God Himself made plain in history. Jesus Christ died upon the Cross on Calvary, in an act of sacrificial obedience, for the salvation of His brethren. On the third day He rose again from the dead, and thereby revealed to us not only the truth, of which men had ever yearned to be assured, that man's spirit escapes the hand of death, but the still more glorious truth that even the body which death lays low is to be redeemed. At birth, then, we enter this world as from God. At death we return in the spirit to our Maker, to await that day when His redemptive work shall be fulfilled.

3. *Our Equipment.*—Let us consider now the equipment with which we come and go. 'We brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out.' But the writer is concerned at the moment with worldly possessions, and does not in the least desire to persuade us that we enter the world and leave it again as creatures destitute of gifts and lacking in all capacity. On the contrary, he plainly means that in coming and going our status is that of a spirit, and that spiritual capacity of some sort is necessarily present. The newborn child brings no addition to the parent's worldly store ; but, what is of far greater importance, he brings an addition to the spiritual resources of the human family. By virtue of the fact that he is a child of God, a created spirit, he comes into the world with latent powers which represent a new possibility of service to God and man. There is great diversity of equipment both in the range of the powers which are bestowed, and in the maximum degree of their possible development : but always we come from God with gifts for use, and always there are those whose hopes for the world are quickened by our advent.

When the end of life's journey is reached, we take with us none of our possessions, but we carry out what we have become by the exercise, right or wrong, of the powers that belonged to our original equipment. What we have gained

[1] William Channing Gannett.

of knowledge and wisdom goes with us. The moral strength that was slowly added to us by long and strenuous battling with the wrong—that, too, goes over. The love that has grown through the years by the repeated performance of kindly and, sometimes perhaps, costly service, and by reason of suffering bravely shared—that belongs to us for ever. And so with all the good things that make up Christian character. If, on the other hand, we have lived as cowards, we shall carry out a craven spirit full of apprehension. If we have cultivated an evil temper, an ugly and defiant spirit; if we have lived grossly and impurely; if we have practised dishonesty and have lived with a lie in the soul; these things will most surely be recorded within us, and we shall carry them over—to judgment. 'We brought nothing into this world.' True; and yet we came with gifts that told of God's hope for us. 'For neither can we carry anything out.' True again; and yet we shall take with us that which determines our weal or woe for all eternity.

¶ Take with you in your journey what you may carry with you, your conscience, faith, hope, patience, meekness, goodness, brotherly kindness; for such wares as these are of great price in the high and new country whither ye go. As for other things which are but this world's vanity and trash . . . ye will do best not to carry them with you. Ye found them here; leave them here.[1]

4. *Our Use of this World.*—We must not suppose that this world is a mere exercising-ground for spirits which are essentially alien to it. The Incarnation and its consequences forbid us to think thus. It is, on the contrary, destined to be brought into a lasting concord with the spirit-world by a process of redemption in which each of us is called to act as an instrument of the power of the Risen Christ. By the use we make of the things of this world we are not only forming the character that is the sum total of the possessions we shall carry away, but we are also promoting, or delaying, that adoption of the creation which was triumphantly initiated by our Lord's resurrection and is being perfected by Him through the ages in a continuing process of judgment.

The world is modified by our passage through it. We leave our mark upon it when we depart. The effects of our life are recorded in the lives of other men, in the face of Nature, and in the very substance of the physical order of which our bodies have formed a part—as well as in the state of our souls. By our every thought and action we are now assisting to declare the sacramental significance of the setting of this present life, or we are darkening the skies and intensifying the earthiness of earth, to the hindrance of our fellows and the obstruction, vain though it be, of the Divine purpose.

Let us endeavour, then, with greater earnestness and desire, to walk as children of light, believing that we came forth from God with a high responsibility laid upon us, and possessed of the capacity for discharging it. Let us be very thankful, as we go upon our way, 'for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and the hope of glory.' And let us prosper with unceasing watchfulness the maturing of that character which is to prove our only enduring possession.

¶ 'Be a good man,' said Sir Walter Scott, when Lockhart came in to bid him the last good-bye. 'Be virtuous; be religious; be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.'

The Love of Money

1 Tim. vi. 10.—'The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (R.V.).

1. NOTHING tends more to associate the pulpit with unreality than mere denunciations of money. For we all know that money in itself is not evil. It speeds on errands of mercy, and lends itself to a thousand philanthropies. It feeds the hungry and clothes the naked; and men who are giving the sweat of their brow or the force of their brain for it are committing no sin but simply doing their duty. Their honest industry and application to business is only praiseworthy in God's sight.

¶ In *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* George Gissing, who had himself known poverty, protests vehemently against disparaging the value and power of money. 'You tell me,' he writes, 'that money cannot buy the things most precious. Your commonplace proves that

[1] Samuel Rutherford.

you have never known the lack of it. When I think of all the sorrow and the barrenness that has been wrought in my life by want of a few more pounds per annum than I was able to earn, I stand aghast at money's significance. What kindly joys have I lost, those simple forms of happiness to which every heart has a claim, because of poverty! Meetings with those I loved made impossible year after year: sadness and misunderstanding, nay, cruel alienation, arising from inability to do the things I wished, and which I might have done had a little money helped me: endless instances of homely pleasure and contentment curtailed, or forbidden, by narrow means. I have lost friends merely through the constraint of my position: friends I might have made have remained strangers to me: solitude of the bitter kind, the solitude that is enforced at times when heart and mind long for companionship, often cursed my life, solely because I was poor.'

2. It is not money itself but the inordinate love of it that is the perilous thing. If it were not so common, it would border on the incredible that men should allow their lives to be blighted by the greed of wealth. The disease is so deadly. It robs its victims of inner peace. Their very faces are stamped with an avaricious look; sweetness and serenity vanish from their nature. They become as metallic as the coin they seek. That familiarity breeds contempt is a rule which admits of few exceptions, but one of those exceptions is money. The more the victim has the more he wants. In the pleasure of accumulation all lovely things perish. Friendship, culture, and spiritual sensitivity may each be sacrificed to this one absorbing passion.

They that find gold—find care,
  The yellow dust is after all but—dust!
  Through their walled treasure-houses moth
    and rust
Creep and corrode, despoiling unaware.
And thieves break through and steal without
    redress
Love, joy, trust, faith, and quiet happiness.[1]

The most dangerous thing about money is that it seduces the heart from God, and men come to look upon it as the ground of their security, and the spring of their confidence. When some dark fear of the future crosses their mind, their thoughts dart off to their money instead of to their God. 'I will be all right,' they think. 'I've got that.' Yet that simple movement of the mind has perilous consequences. In the passing of the years it builds a false faith on something which cannot sustain them in the darkest hours of life, and filches trust from the One who is alone sufficient for their need. Any thing which weakens the conviction that our security is only in God is dangerous, and nothing weakens that conviction more than the love of money.[1]

¶ I sat in the train one day and spoke to a travelling companion about God. 'God?' he said. 'This is God'—and he tapped the money he had in his pockets till it jingled. 'Do you see that stone out there? We have no more soul than that stone. Heaven is when you have a good living and hell is when you haven't.'[2]

3. It must not be forgotten that the peril of riches does not depend on their *possession*. A man is in the grip of money whose little hoard would be entirely beneath the notice of a serious financier, if that man puts pre-eminent worth upon money, and lives and longs for nothing else.

To be delivered from the love of money, in such sense that the desire for it poisons his life, a man requires to have three convictions deeply sunk in his mind. For one thing, he should note that *there are better things than money*. Good health is better; a cultivated intelligence is better; a sympathetic heart is better; a clear conscience is better. With these it is possible to be happy without money; but without these the happiness which money gives is deceitful. There are some things we can do without, and one of these is wealth; but there are some things we cannot do without, such as a clean conscience and a useful life; and, if we must choose between money and these, we forgo the money.

¶ When Elihu Root was called into the Roosevelt Cabinet as Secretary of State, an intimate friend wrote him: 'Why not wait three years and get the substance instead of being the shadow now?'

[1] Emma Herrick Weed.

[1] W. E. Sangster, *He Is Able*, 58.
[2] E. Stanley Jones.

Mr Root wrote back: 'I have always thought that the opportunity to do something worth while is the substance, and trying to get something was the shadow.' [1]

A second conviction, to be engraven still more deeply on the mind, is that *money is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end.* It will tyrannize over us if it is allowed, but we prove ourselves its masters when we compel it to subserve the ends which we have freely chosen as our own, and which our judgment and conscience approve.

The well-to-do man is often described as a 'man of means.' But not infrequently the phrase is a misnomer; because means imply ends to which they are devoted, and many a wealthy man has no such ends. He does not know why he makes money; he is the slave of money, which claims all his thoughts and all his energy. Yet the phrase 'a man of means' conveys the hint that money can be used in promoting rational and useful ends, and this is true.

¶ David Livingstone, before he had thought of being a missionary, devoted to foreign missions all his wages as a patternmaker, except so much as was required for his frugal personal wants, and there have not been wanting in recent times those who have carried on large and flourishing businesses, the profits of which they have devoted to some favourite scheme of benevolence.

The third principle about money deserving to be kept in mind, if we are to escape bondage to it is, that *it cannot be kept for ever.* The rich man cannot keep his riches for ever. 'He heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.' 'He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him.' There is an old Italian proverb, 'They will make me no pocket in my shroud'; and if the expression is a somewhat macabre one, it also enshrines an undeniable truth. To have become very wealthy in this life will offer no advantage to a man in that day. But, though you can carry nothing else away with you, you will even then not be able to escape from yourself. What you must take with you beyond the grave is your character, for good or evil, which, from day to day, you have been building up by thoughts and words and works throughout your life. A noble character is indeed 'the true riches' which it is no avarice for men to covet and to strive after. In so doing, they are daily 'laying up for themselves treasures in heaven' in the eternal, ideal world, 'where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' And 'where your treasure is there will your heart be also.'

[1] C. R. Gavinghurst.

'O Man of God'

1 Tim. vi. 11.—'But thou, O man of God.'
2 Tim. iii. 17.—'That the man of God may be perfect.'

1. One of the most interesting and rewarding of New Testament studies is that of the titles, either assumed by the followers of Christ, or conferred upon them by others. For each suggests some characteristic, either of their life as seen by others, or of their purpose and aim as cherished by themselves. For instance, they were known among themselves as *disciples*, because they were fellow-learners in Christ's school. They were known also as *brethren*, because of the law of love which bound them in mutual recognition and consideration. They were known, too, as *saints*, because their common aim was a life of holiness, in correspondence with the life of Him whose name they bore, and in whose steps they sought to follow. Their opponents at Antioch on one occasion nicknamed them *Christians*, because they were so evidently followers of Christ. It is, in passing, of interest to note that they were not called *Jesuits*, followers of Jesus. It was evident to their critics that it was not the human Jesus to whom they were devoted. They recognized that those early disciples were devoted to Christ the Anointed Messiah, Christ the Divine Son of God, so attested, as they affirmed, by His resurrection from the dead. They were hence dubbed '*Christians*,' which of all distinguishing titles persists.

But none of the many titles ascribed to believers or assumed by them in the New Testament is so suggestive in its descriptive meaning, nor is so full of implied possibility as this one—'man of God.' Paul applies it in particular to Timothy, and generally to all Christ's followers. It is probable that he adopted the title from the Old Testament, where it is applied in turn to three men—Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.

Obviously in Old Testament days it was more or less a titular designation—just another name for *prophet*. In an age when there was only an elementary and fragmentary consciousness of God, as in Moses' day, or when amid prevalent idolatry there was no open vision, as in the days of Elijah and Elisha, those men who plainly had access to God, who declared His laws and demonstrated His being and His nature, were popularly known as '*men of God*.' And, doubtless, Paul takes this title from the old records and confers it upon Timothy, who himself was familiarized with the sacred Scriptures from childhood and would readily recognize its significance. For him then, and now for us, it sets a standard, and thereby institutes a searching comparison.

2. The full significance of the designation may, perhaps, be appreciated more clearly by us if we remember the familiar use of analogous terms. We speak of a 'man of the world,' or a 'man of leisure,' or a 'man of wealth,' or a 'man of ability,' or a 'man of business.' And when we do so what do we mean? Just this: that these several things are the outstanding influences of their lives. What the world is to a man of the world, what wealth is to a man of wealth, what, in short, the ideals and pursuits for which men spend, and often indeed squander, their lives are to them, God is to be to us. A 'man of God' is one whose reaction to the fact of God, as he increasingly apprehends Him in Jesus Christ, is unvarying, constant, to be relied upon. Just as the man of the world, or the man of business, may be depended upon to act under all circumstances consistently with his devotion, so the 'man of God' is unfailing in his instinctive loyalty to Him.

He may be a man of diversified activity. In all likelihood he will be. Since no man of mere passivity, of tame acceptance of life as it comes, of unprotesting acquiescence in a state of things in the world which practically denies God, can ever be thought of as a 'man of God.' For there is no likeness to God, who is essential activity, in such manner of life. But though he is a man of diversified activities his interests are all unified under a dominant purpose. The sacred to him is the core of the secular; and that in such a way as that the secular becomes the expression of the sacred.

¶ Richard Watson Gilder, whose diversified activities included those of editor, lawyer, soldier, poet, and social reformer, wrote these lines:

I think no thought that is not thine, no breath
Of life I breathe beyond Thy sanctity:
Thou art the Voice that Silence uttereth,
And of all sound Thou art the sense. From Thee
The music of my song, and what it saith
Is but the beat of Thy heart throbbed through me.

3. In the nature of the case, the life of a 'man of God' is never untroubled, never unopposed. The more unmistakably he is identified with God the more aggravated will be the hostility or the neglect, the aggressive opposition or the passive indifference, the venomous half-truths or the malignant lies, under which he will suffer. For the thing his life stands for is the very thing the world will not have—the government of its ways by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world, secular and religious, has, in fact, its own god—'the god of this world'—to which it pays an enforced and costly homage. And the 'man of God' inevitably shares the treatment of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in such a world. But he will go on doing what a despised God does—ministering to the needs of His rejectors. And, *mirabile dictu*, he overcomes the world, not by his opposition to its slanders and hatreds but by his meekness and by his faith. And by means of the antagonism by which he is assailed his own Christlike character will be developed.

¶ Eastern and Western art are markedly different in character. The pictures of Oriental artists, strikingly brilliant in colour, very accurate in drawing, are yet without depth and weight, characteristically flat and superficial. What makes the difference? In Oriental art there are no shadows; while in that of the West, with which we are more familiar, it is the shadows that make the beauty and fullness.

4. It is full of interest to note the duties that Timothy was to undertake, the offices he was to discharge. We find, for instance, such injunctions as these: 'War a good warfare!' 'Be a good minister of Jesus Christ!' 'Give attendance to reading, exhortation, doctrine!' 'Be an example of believers in personal

character!' 'Follow after the Christian virtues—faith, love, patience!' 'Endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ!' That is something, at least, of what it means to be a 'man of God.' This is not mere sentiment. There is nothing abstract about a life of holiness. It is a full life if ever a full life was lived. There will be, at least, no reflection falling upon God because the one who bears His name is taking life easily, shifting its burdens on to others, or seeking the path of selfish enjoyment. And the more certainly is this so because such a life will result, as Paul says to Timothy, not in widespread and amazing successes. He says, in effect, to him, 'You will have to face the discouragement which comes when the Truth you preach is rejected by its hearers. You will have to meet the dissuasions of perilous times and persecutions. You will have to face the searching tests of seeming fruitlessness.' And only one who is actually a 'man of God,' one who is 'dead sure' of Him and of his own relationship to Him, can maintain unaffected confidence and undeflected aim in face of all this.

¶ An old man, who had borne much and suffered long in the service of Jesus Christ, was expressing his life's intention, and this is what he said: 'My prayer is that I may have work to the end of my life, and life to the end of my work.'

In urging Timothy to be a 'man of God,' and speaking down the ages by the same Holy Spirit to us, was the Apostle thinking of those men of earlier days who had conspicuously borne this title? Well, if so, let us remind ourselves that none of them, neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Elisha, was without fault. Yet each of them was clearly recognized for what he was by the people of his own day. Nothing else explained their quality but God. For they continued to serve despite their obvious personal failures and their disappointing accomplishments. Their testimony to Him was never invalidated by their desertion of His service. And each of them brought a sense of God into every company and every situation. 'O man of God' do not look at your own imperfections; do not look at your own failures in the past; do not look at your own disqualifications and discredited professions. Look to Him to fulfil in you the undertakings of His grace.

¶ Some of you have been in Switzerland, and have not only seen but enjoyed the experience of an ascent to some of those wonderful Alpine peaks by way of the railroads which are erected up their steep slopes. And as you have gone up you have marvelled at the engineering skill which has made it possible for you, who could never have climbed hither, to be transported in ease and comfort to the very summit. On the way up you have passed the power-houses from whence the necessary electric energy is conveyed. Have you realized that you were actually ascending the mountain by power which has come from the snow-fields toward which you journeyed? For some of that snow has melted, and by the ingenuity of the engineers the streams so formed have been transformed, as they flowed toward the valley, into power. You were actually carried up by that which had first been sent down.[1]

The Moral Equivalent of War

1 Tim. vi. 12.—'Fight the good fight of faith.'

This is how St Paul conceives the life and mission of a bishop. He is to be a spiritual leader, a trustee of faith and morals, a guardian and dispenser of ministerial orders, a teacher and prophet of the gospel of God. He compares him to a craftsman, a husbandman, a household vessel, and a bond-servant. But it is the thought of the soldier to which he comes back again and again, as if it seemed to supply the image which best embodies his ideal. 'Endure hardness as a good soldier'; 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier'; 'that thou mightest war a good warfare.' Looking back he applies the same metaphor to the long years of his own labours—'I have fought a good fight.' And so now, as he pours out his heart in counsel and appeal to the younger man, to whom he is bound by so many ties of common spiritual experience and affection, all his desires and purposes for him pass into this vigorous charge: 'Fight the good fight of faith.'

1. This is the language of war; and we to whom war is so grim a reality must feel a

[1] J. S. Holden.

wealth of new meaning pulsing through it. The call of national necessity, the splendid comradeship of service on behalf of all that makes life moral and spiritual and lifts it above a godless chaos which is ruled by brute force, the high romance of giving oneself away for the more-than-self which is the background of all idealism and all religion, the breaking in upon smooth, easy living of a sudden demand to sacrifice all for a cause which is worthy of all that one has to give—these things have been a trumpet-blast to the soul of the nation during these war years. We have seen the smaller interests of sections in the State merged in the great flood of patriotism, and the partisan loyalties of political life, while not abolished, yet certainly subordinated to the higher demands of national service. Everywhere we have felt a new spirit of self-devotion to a great cause, confessing the obligation to give one's share, however small, to the whole effort of the nation.

In one of his penetrating discussions of religious questions William James expressed what many of us are feeling now as we look forward to the future. 'One hears,' he says, 'of the mechanical equivalent of heat. What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible.' Many men and women are already asking how the newly-awakened spirit of self-devotion and obligation can be preserved and applied to the solution of the problems that will crowd in upon us with the coming of peace. But to the Church this question must needs present itself in a form yet deeper, shaped by the facts of its own faith and mission. It is precisely these great changes of spirit and outlook upon life which we have witnessed since the outbreak of war that the Church exists to manifest and to kindle always and everywhere among men in their relationships to one another, and above all in their relationship to God. It is these very things which Christ claimed from His disciples, and Himself revealed in His own life and death. Christianity has always demanded for Jesus Christ and His kingdom the whole-hearted devotion and sacrifice which men are now giving for their country. The unity which is felt under pressure of danger, and flows naturally out of loyalty to the homeland, is a living image of the unity which is to spring from loyalty to Him, absorbing and including in itself all lesser attachments and partial affinities and sympathies. The courage which attempts the seemingly impossible, the great romance of riding out through danger to break an evil power and to win freedom for the oppressed, are the inner secrets of His own most glorious Cross and Passion. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,' 'He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me cannot be my disciple.'

¶ The Rev. Gwilym Davies tells the story of a friend who took his son to see the famous war play *Journey's End*. The effect upon the youth (who was only three when the last war broke out) was that at the close of the play he turned to his father and burst out excitedly, *Dad, Dad; how I wish I had been in it!*

2. Think of all that, and then set over against it the actual Church as we know it in its war with sin. Does the picture suggest that we are revealing to the world that we possess in Christ the moral equivalent for war which the modern philosopher sets out to discover?

None of us doubts the deadly danger in which we stand from the colossal schemes of German ambition to deprive us and other peoples of the liberty to think and act for ourselves, which is the first condition of national freedom. The recognition of what that would mean to ourselves and to our children, and what it has already done to weaker nations unable to defend themselves, has stirred into the noble life and energy we know the spiritual passions which had come near to expending themselves upon barren political quarrels and bitter class warfare. There were not lacking prophet voices to warn us that we were travelling down a road that led to certain self-destruction, and the break-up of all that had been slowly built up through the long centuries of our past. But the Church as a whole, which, if it is anything, ought surely to be the organ of the national conscience, has been strangely faltering in its witness and appeal. The Church has been feeble because it has been rent with party strife itself. How can it urge upon political parties and antagonistic social movements the need of a loftier spirit of unity in devotion to the common weal, when it is talking of disruption

because of difficulties about fellowship with other Christian bodies and ceremonial controversies within itself? The best leaders of the Labour Movement have been right when they have told us that we cannot be Christian and at the same time regard with such a slight uneasiness the social evils which only our familiarity with them permits us to tolerate unmoved. No one who has followed the missionary movements of these past years can escape the conclusion that, outside the circle of those to whom this is the paramount Church question, the Church as a corporate body has scarcely begun to undertake the task of giving God's gospel to the world, or even to realize that to do this is a practical and urgent duty. We have approached both this and our social problems in a spirit of cold calculation and half-heartedness which are radically different from the way in which we are carrying on the War.

Here and now in this time of stress and trial we are all hopefully working together and waiting for the day of peace and victory. Are we ready for it? Victor Hugo, looking back upon Waterloo from the middle of the nineteenth century, declared that victory is not regeneration. 'Only barbarous nations,' he says, 'grow suddenly after victory—it's the transient vanity of torrents swollen by a storm.' Can we conceive anything more tragic, or any blacker treachery to those who have given their all for England, than that, having been delivered from the unclean spirits that haunted us before the War, its end should reveal us to be a nation empty, swept, and garnished, and ready to become the dwelling-place of devils sevenfold more than before? That will be our case, if we face our new problems in the old bad way, with the same dreary lack of the great spirit which alone can solve them, and if we fail to turn upon the foes within our own borders the same forces of self-forgetfulness and loyalty to the highest interests, to which, under God, we shall owe our escape from the dangers that now threaten to overwhelm us.

3. If the Church cannot give to the new outlook upon life and duty the religious expression which it requires, it will be guilty of the greatest of all failures—to possess the secrets of national regeneration and yet not to employ them. We believe that the heart of all human problems—economic, social, and moral—is spiritual, and that Christ—so often unrecognized and so constantly refused—stands behind them all, ready to show men the way to work them out. We know that His way is the way of the Cross, the warrior way, the soldier's way of self-devotion. How then can we fail to see how closely He touches the question whether the nation can be saved from the peril of reaction, when the urgency of the call to this high level of self-sacrifice appears to lessen? We cannot refuse to claim for Him who is its rightful owner the young life that has been touched to such fine issues. But if we are to be worthy to make that claim, we must be purged from our own pettinesses and discords. We must be animated by a larger spirit, the spirit of love and holiness, which will destroy the jarring animosities and partial outlooks that hitherto have paralysed our service. To a Church united and inspired by a new devotion to Christ and to His Kingdom all things are possible in the new world that is being won for us by the blood of sacrifice on the world's battle-fields to-day.

What we need is the spirit of war, the blowing of the trumpet to call us out to battle, the vision of need which awakens sacrifice and arouses in men the faith that removes mountains. The Church of the New Testament was a warrior Church, and it went forth conquering and to conquer. It had caught the spirit of Calvary, and Calvary is pure, unmitigated war. All the high adventurousness, the self-forgetfulness, the calm heroism of the soldier shine out in the Crucified upon His Cross. War!—with full readiness to suffer, if the cause of the Lord Christ demands it, that He may come to His own in the world for which He died. War!—in the spirit of His Cross and Passion through which He purchased the right to reign and to call His Church through a like surrender to dare all things in His Name. War!—boldly claiming for Him the faith and service of all who have learned the freedom which is His alone who believes and acts upon the belief that love of self is less than love of honour, and duty is more than life itself. War!—with all war's glory and without its horrors, because it is war to liberate men and not to enslave them, to give and not to get, to build and not to destroy. War!—whose weapon is not force but faith, whose motive is not the lust of gain but the love of souls, which, wherever it passes, leaves behind it not broken homes, and shattered

lives, and wasted wealth, but the enrichment of humanity in every part of its wounded, troubled life with the grace and fullness of God.

'We hope to win?' By God's help, 'Yes!'
Though of the 'where' no man may guess,
  Since there must yet be weary strain,
  Alternate joy, alternate pain,
Till Victory come, at end, to bless!

But there are other wars that press,
Wars bred of fulness and excess,
Which—if we would our place maintain—
  We hope to win.

There is the war with selfishness—
A sluggish fiend that doubts distress;
  With hearts that fail, and lips that feign;
  With vice and drink and greed of gain—
These are the wars in which, not less,
  We hope to win.

The Supreme Quest

1 Tim. vi. 12.—'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.'

1. It is impossible to apprehend the true bearing of this exhortation without reading in connexion therewith the whole chapter of which it forms part. Timothy is being bidden to avoid all worldly seductions and concentrate his desires upon the one great thing which constitutes his vocation. 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things—that is, worldly things—and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.' Then follows a solemn adjuration to be faithful to this commission until the second coming of Christ took place, whenever that might be.

It has been conjectured that the fine ringing succession of appellations—Blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the sole possessor of immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom mortal eye has never beheld—formed part of an early Christian hymn, sung in the regular assemblies of the Church for worship. As a description of the Supreme Being it may have been derived from contemporary Greek sources; Platonists could and did use this kind of language; it was common enough among the Gnostics. Does it here refer to God the Father only, or to God as revealed in Christ? There is good reason to believe that it includes both. It is God in Christ who is the supreme object of the soul's quest, but remains ever hidden and remote except as self-communicated to the heart that seeks Him in humility, faith, and love.

There is therefore an intentional importance in what is here so earnestly urged upon a youthful servant of Christ. He is to maintain a warfare for his faith, to lay firm hold upon eternal life and let all lesser things go, to put away from himself everything that would hinder him from attaining to the one all-inclusive good that man can know in this or any other world.

We do no violence to the meaning of the counsel so impressively given in these terms if we say that the appearing or manifestation of Christ here alluded to as the Christian's dearest hope can be mystically as well as historically construed. There is plentiful justification for this statement, not only in the Pauline letters, but in the Johannine writings. That the primitive Church lived in the intense expectation of the visible return of Christ in glory is, of course, obvious to any reader of the New Testament; but it is equally true that that consummation was felt to be anticipated in the experience of those who had laid hold on eternal life. There is a revelation of Christ in the sanctified soul, a *parousia*, an unveiling of the Divine majesty in the inmost shrine of our being, which is in itself salvation, or rather the realization thereof, and is the most precious possession that any of us can either know or desire as long as we dwell in this our earthly tabernacle.

2. The message of the text, then, is just this. The one fundamental reality behind all that we know about ourselves and the world in which we live is the being of God. It is a fact that has far more to do with us than any other fact that enters into our experience. But what do we positively know about God? At first hand nothing. 'No man hath seen God at any time.' He is at once the most unescapable fact in our lives and the most inscrutable. Yet if we could only know God as He is, if the veil were only taken away from before our eyes, or, to put the truth more accurately, if only our

eyes could be opened to behold the invisible and eternal, we should have found that which would for ever make an end of all that has power to hurt us and hold us in bondage. All that oppresses and hinders us in our quest for satisfaction, all that makes us burdened, anxious, afraid, or sad at heart, all our delusions and misgivings, would disappear like shadows dancing on a cloud. If we could uncover, if only for a moment, that underlying, all-pervading, all-comprehending Divine life without which nothing is or could be, we should be utterly at rest about the problem of living in all its vast and various modes and meanings.

This is what sanctified souls, the adepts of the spiritual life, have always told us with united voice. But there are those among the voices of to-day, as in every previous age, who tell us something very different about the ultimate mystery of existence; and if they be right, it were surely better that we should know the truth, however unwelcome. We are all standing, as it were, before a drawn curtain, the curtain that veils from us the great secret, the knowledge of which would explain everything, including ourselves. What is on the other side of that curtain—not on the other side of death, but on the other side, the inner side, of all the knowledge we at present possess of what we are and whence we came?

There are those, of course, and they are not few, who do not want to know what is on the other side. These are what we may rightly call materialists—not in theory, but in practice. Materialism as a theory is dead; no one really holds it now; but materialism in practice is very much alive. Perhaps there never was a time in the history of our civilization when men were so absorbed in the contemplation of the things of sense or so satisfied therewith, to the virtual exclusion of all interest in the things of the spirit.

On the other hand, there are some serious minds which insist that there is nothing on the other side of the curtain. Bertrand Russell is a very able thinker, though a pessimistic one, and he and all his school declare emphatically that the quest in which we are here and now engaged is sheer waste of time, that religion is merely a pathetic delusion, a soporific, a drug wherewith we try to give ourselves pleasant dreams.

This is a charge frequently brought against adherents of the Christian faith, but it is quite untrue. No ordinary mind can rest for long in what it suspects to be a lie; we are under compulsion to face the truth, however dark it be. Bertrand Russell and those who think with him would not admit that they were materialists, nor are they in the strict sense of the term; they do not blink facts nor affect an optimism for which they see no justification in the constitution of things. But there are other teachers, such as H. G. Wells, who try to delude themselves and us by a continual whooping about the greatness and the glory, the wonder and the triumph, the splendour and success that still await humanity on this planet. This is a creed that accords well with the mechanization of the globe that is so rapidly going on. The achievements of science are, indeed, stupendous and we do well to admire them; but if we seek to make of them a substitute for the fulfilment of our spiritual cravings, we are woefully self-deceived. In the last resort the individual matters more than society, paradoxical though it sound to say so; and the individual has little to gain from all this speeding up of life which is going on. Leave God out of the reckoning, and the future of the individual is but little brighter than it ever was. Here is a power which all men know, an inner urge which all men feel, compelling them on occasion to superhuman effort in obedience to high spiritual vision, but a power that knows nothing of their toils and sorrows, cares nothing for their moral grandeurs, and leaves them to perish hopelessly at the last. Do not let us hoodwink ourselves: this is a gospel of despair. And there are many more among the voices of the time, some charged with moral passion, others with none; some with a call to betterment, others with neither idealism nor hope in their accents; who bid us forbear to entertain illusions as to what lies on the other side of that curtain towards which in our best moments, and in all our deepest and truest experience of life, we turn a wistful gaze.

¶ 'Does the world as a whole possess the value and meaning that we constantly attribute to certain parts of it (such as human beings and their works), and, if so, what is the nature of this value and meaning? This is a question which, a few years ago, I should not even have posed. For like so many of my con-

temporaries I took it for granted that there was no meaning.' [1]

¶ A distinguished soldier, a man of fine religious nature, as is true of so many of the world's best fighters, put forth a book of confessions years ago, wherein he told how his own thoughts were brought to a focus on this question. Walking along a country road he was run down by an automobile and seriously injured. For months he lay in hospital, enduring the most terrible pain while slowly struggling back to life, and here is what he says about it: 'I have described my sufferings at length and in detail, not because there was anything unusual in them, but because they are so very common, because there is so much worse suffering in the world, and because, reflecting on all this suffering, I could not help asking myself whether the usual view of things could possibly be correct—that we were under the care and guardianship of a kind and almighty Being who was ever watching over us to protect us from all evil.'

3. The answer to this challenge is the text, which is in itself a challenge. There is an indefeasible experience which all men may have, but at a price. Once get possession of it, and the most urgent problems of life are solved. It is not an easy experience to arrive at; it would not be worth much if it were. One of the greatest mistakes that any one could make would be to imagine that the gospel of Jesus Christ is one easy of acceptance. It is far from being that, as His own recorded words make sufficiently clear. As Dean Inge says, God never intended to make faith easy; the highest values in life have to be fought for and won.

Dr Rufus Jones reminds us that we all have to live by two sets of values, primary and secondary—those which are rightly termed eternal, and those which are temporal. The latter include all the ordinary, everyday ends of our activity—the winning of food and shelter, the maintenance of health and home, the service of those we love and of the community to which we belong. But in all these and apart from them there is a greater and more abiding good to be sought, a good which will still be ours in undiminished fullness—nay, in greater and more glorious measure—when all things earthly have passed away. To be possessed of this is to be possessed of that knowledge of God in Christ which is in itself eternal life.

But there can be no compromise. The supreme quest must ever be kept in view and everything else subordinated to it, and that means a hard fight with the old Adam. It will mean that we are being made over again, as it were, in the likeness of our Lord. It will mean that we centre our thoughts and aims as intensely on spiritual reality as others do on secular success. And then by and by the miracle will happen. The curtain will lift. We will become as sure of God and of the fire of His love that burns up all the corruption of our nature as other men are sure of money or pleasure or gratified ambition. And we will never want to exchange the one for the other. When the love of God lays hold of us, when we become conformed to the likeness of Christ, we are at the very heart of the mystery of existence.

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, 269.

ADVICE FOR LIVING

1 Tim. vi. 12, 20.—'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life . . . keep that which is committed to thy trust.'

The friendship between Paul and Timothy, the one old and the other young, is among the most beautiful things in the New Testament. Their common love for Jesus and their regard for each other's qualities overcame the obstacles which disparity in age sometimes places in the way of intimacy between men of different generations. Paul could speak to Timothy like a father and Timothy listened with the deference of a son.

Here, claiming the privilege of age, Paul proffered certain advice. The experienced disciple was nearing the end of his pilgrimage which, when he was younger, had looked so lengthy, but which, in retrospect, seemed 'like yesterday when it is past and as a watch in

the night.' How well the older man knew how life looked to one standing on its threshold! The years ahead seemed to offer time not only to do those things he wished to do but to engage in much else besides. Yet how often, Paul knew, a man, dissipating his energies, reached the eventide conscious of how quickly life had flown and how many important tasks remained unattempted. It was that fact that constrained Paul to write as he did. What he had seen happen in other lives he had no desire to see happen in Timothy's. 'Fight the good fight of faith,' he counselled the younger man, 'lay hold on eternal life . . . keep that which is committed to thy trust.'

There is not one of us for whom such advice is not needful. We have a desire to make a success of life, to reach the end of our days with a record of solid achievement behind us. That being so, we must be careful that we are not misled concerning the solid things, what is worth doing and what is not, what is of consequence to ourselves and to others also. Keeping Paul's counsel constantly before us, we are on the way to that record of solid achievement which it is our desire to reach.

1. 'Fight,' said Paul first of all, 'the good fight of faith.'

Every man among us has certain energies which it is his to direct as he will. They can be enlisted in the service of a variety of enterprises, in how great a variety of enterprises a short time devoted to a consideration of the crusades in which men and women spend themselves will quickly reveal. Some such crusades are worthy, while others are unworthy; some are engaged in from selfish motives and others from motives entirely altruistic. And the criticism which best fits certain lives is not that they have been listless and inactive, but that they have spent themselves in the wrong directions. 'How terribly,' says Dr Fosdick in one of his books, 'do we misuse our pugnacity; to what bloody ends we let it run! Yet how indispensable pugnacity is, and to what high employments it can be put—this inner flare of combativeness. . . . Like every other basic instinct,' he reminds us, 'pugnacity is an elemental endowment that ill used can ruin the world, or well used can help to save it.'

Is there one of us to-day who does not regret that so much of human pugnacity is being misdirected? As we contemplate the ruin which has overtaken many lands, the pain and privation which many of our human kind are called to bear because of the selfish ambitions of a few, is there one thinking man who does not realise the beneficent results which would accrue were the energies of the nations to be devoted to causes which are constructive? If only men and women everywhere could be constrained to unite in a *good* fight—a fight against disease, against poverty, against all social evils, what a different world we should have!

While all that is true, however, a man's responsibility, as Paul endeavoured on this occasion to impress upon young Timothy, is primarily for his own life. How are the individual man's energies being directed? Is he, both in private and in public, both in his home and in his business, fighting for his own hand and thereby increasing the sum total of selfishness which, more than anything else, lies at the root of the world's anguish to-day? Or is he, recognizing the sorrows which selfishness leaves in its train, endeavouring to conquer that in his own life which makes everything miserable for himself and for others also? Fight, Paul counselled Timothy, fight the good fight—endeavour to win for righteousness within your own life the battle which, on a larger scale, is being fought in the world; use every resource in your power to overcome every tendency towards evil. Only so, he suggested, could Timothy hope to fashion a life at once satisfying to himself and useful to his fellows.

There is something in that counsel of Paul's which constitutes a challenge to every thinking man. Our energies, the majority of us must confess, have been largely misdirected. We have been concerned about our own place, but not about the place of others, in the scheme of things. We have been hurt by our own pain, but have been unaffected by the pain of others. We have been fighting, all of us have been fighting, but not in what Paul described as the *good* fight of faith; and until a man has begun such a fight within the compass of his own life he has done little towards helping a world which to-day is greatly in need of help.

2. 'Lay hold,' Paul continued, 'upon eternal life.'

In any life which is to satisfy, a man must

be careful not only concerning those things to which his energies must be given but concerning the prizes he fain would win. Some prizes are not nearly so well worth striving for as are others. Some, though they have the appearance of being solid and lasting, are neither solid nor lasting. They lead one on only to deceive one in the end. How solid and lasting, for example, did material possessions appear even before this present catastrophe overtook the world! And how quickly have we seen buildings demolished and money rendered valueless! In all your striving, Paul counselled Timothy, don't omit to set your heart upon the prizes that nothing can destroy—character, the communion of a soul with God, the enjoyment of a life which is not wholly dependent upon external things but is fed by inward springs. Lay hold upon eternal life.

Is it not because some have paid little heed to Paul's counsel that they, in spite of all their acquired possessions, derive so little satisfaction from life? Man can never be satisfied by material things, no matter how numerous and imposing such material things are. He is spirit as well as body and has hungers and desires and ambitions which to deny in himself is to condemn himself to a life which can never satisfy him.

How important it is that we should fully realize the real end of life and the real purpose of living—not only for ourselves but for others also! For, according to our interpretation of the real end of life, so will we treat not only our own life but the lives of others. Professor C. E. M. Joad, in whose broadcasts many of us are interested, reminds us in a recent book, *Philosophy for our Times*, that we are witnessing to-day a contest between men who hold different views concerning the end of life. 'The questions,' he says, 'that divide Fascists from Communists, on the one hand, and Fascists and Communists from Liberal Democrats, on the other, are *not questions as to the way* in which a desirable condition of human society may best be realized; they are *questions as to what constitutes* a desirable condition of human society.' How some who are to-day contending for the mastery of the world would treat individual men and women all over the world, were they to triumph in the present conflict, few of us can be in any doubt. Their conception of the end of life is such that they would deny them certain privileges which some of us believe are men's inalienable rights. They would condemn them to live a life which some of us are sure is not a man's life. But it is not enough to criticize the sponsors of certain attitudes to life. There must be a positive statement made by all Christian men and women concerning what we believe to be the end of life, and a positive endeavour made by us not only to achieve the purpose for which God created *us* but also to help others to achieve the purpose for which God created *them*. 'Lay hold on eternal life,' Paul counselled Timothy, well knowing that once he himself had glimpsed the purpose of life he would not rest content until others were given the chances he claimed for himself.

If *our* conception of the end of life is Christian, if *we* are persuaded that things material cannot of themselves satisfy us, that will determine not only our attitude to our own life but our attitude to the life of others also. If we cannot be satisfied with little things, neither, we shall be persuaded, can any other who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, being so persuaded, we shall not rest content until others are given the opportunities of realizing themselves which we claim for ourselves. 'Fight the good fight of faith,' said Paul to Timothy, who, he was anxious, should live a full and useful life, 'Fight the good fight and lay hold upon eternal life.'

3. And said Paul, finally, 'keep that which is committed to thy trust.'

Timothy had entered into a noble heritage. He had been nurtured in the most holy faith. To his keeping had been entrusted truths to which, wherever his lot was cast, he must bear constant and faithful witness. What he had received he must conceive it his duty to hand on unimpaired to the generation following. If he failed in this, he would be depriving others of a possession without which their life would be infinitely poorer.

As Timothy required to be put in remembrance by Paul, so do many of us in our day and generation. We can help the world by engaging in the good fight of faith and by laying hold on eternal life. We can equally help the world by keeping that which was once committed to our trust. For, like Timothy, we have entered into a noble heritage. We have entered into

other men's labours and enjoy blessings and privileges which have come to us in some instances through others' pain and sacrifice. Such things are not our own. We are simply trustees. And as trustees it is our duty to pass them on unimpaired to the generation following. There are values which have made a difference to our lives which we must endeavour to uphold. There are certain sanctities which in a world like ours are in danger of being disregarded which we must not allow to be treated lightly. There are privileges of worship and service which some would filch from us which we must strive to guard. Such things, no matter how the world advances, no generation can afford to discard. But, if they are to be preserved and handed on intact to the generation following, those of us who, like Timothy, have entered into a noble heritage must strive to keep what has been committed to us. The values and sanctities and privileges are our peculiar care. An endeavour to safeguard them may lead us, as it has led others, to loss and sorrow, for wicked men now, like wicked men in all generations, are not interested in what makes life good and glad. But, if in our endeavour to preserve values and sanctities and privileges we suffer loss and endure many a rebuff besides, we shall not only be in good company but engaged in the best of enterprises. Is there a thinking man who does not realize that the men and women who are to-day in concentration camps because of their love for and their witness to the values and sanctities and privileges which have made life worth the living are doing an incalculable service to humanity? Is there a thinking man who, realizing the difference there would be were such values and sanctities and privileges withdrawn, does not feel constrained to take some share in so noble a struggle wherever he is given the opportunity? 'Keep what has been committed unto thee,' Paul counselled Timothy, and surely, having regard to the world in which we live, such counsel is sorely needed to-day. There is a contest between different attitudes to life. Any wavering on our part, any playing fast and loose with values, any careless disregard of the sanctities, any indifference to the privileges we have enjoyed, may well affect not only our own lives but the lives of countless men and women. Let us, therefore, keep that which has been committed to us.

It is a long time since Paul proffered this advice to his young friend. But the passing years, so far from rendering it valueless, have served to emphasize its importance. If any man would fulfil the purpose for which he was sent into the world let him fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life and keep that which is committed to his trust.

RODERICK BETHUNE.

Capitalized Grace

2 Tim. i. 5.—'I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.'

1. Is this reference to Timothy's grandmother and mother to be taken as anything more than a pleasant remembrance of two good women? Is it seriously meant that what they were counted in Timothy's religion? It is hardly to be doubted that this is the suggestion, and thereupon arise more questions. Have family connexions and a family heritage any bearing upon particular and personal religion? Has the precarious science of eugenics, which is the application of biological science to sociology, any kind of foothold in morals and religion?

The idea, at first, wears an attractive look. It looks like a principle of conservation. It looks as if it would solve at least some of the bitterest enigmas. The Kingdom of God might be secured on the simple lines of succession. The law of the Spirit might resolve itself into a law of natural inheritance.

But a suspicion infects the mind. We begin to wonder whether goodness and godliness which came by a way so easy would be worth the name of goodness and godliness. Spiritual achievement would be only a reminiscence. More disconcerting still, such a law of spiritual heritage would of necessity work both ways, if it worked at all. Multitudes would be damned from their birth, and with a finality more real than any social reformer has had to reckon with. So the speculation grows grim and forbidding. Responsibility disappears out of wickedness; value goes out of goodness; worth departs out of character; initiative vanishes from life.

There is more than a disintegrating suspicion

about these fancies. The facts of life break the notion to pieces. There is the plain fact of the bad who come of good stock. 'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.' Happily this is not all that is to be said. If the moral succession cannot be reckoned upon, the immoral succession breaks down also. One of the most sinister life-stories of the Old Testament is lit up by a surprise of this kind. It is the bad story of Jeroboam, of whom the prophet said, 'Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee.' But a light shone in the dark house of Jeroboam, for there was a son of that evil line who was different. He could not save the situation, and, in truth, all that came to him was an honourable grave. But this was not a small thing in a dishonoured line. 'He only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave; because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.'

2. What is this talk of good stock or bad? Who is there that is altogether either of one or the other? Be it asked with all reverence, Was the genealogy of our Lord Himself without spot or blemish or any such thing? The genealogy stands within the Gospel, and there are significant omissions. 'Joram begat Ozias'; but Joram was not the father of Ozias. Between the two came no fewer than three ignoble life-stories. It was a recognized principle among the Jews that nefarious names might be dropped out of view in genealogies, but there are names frankly written in the list which lie in shadow. 'There were links of iron and brass in the line, as well as of silver and gold.' The Incarnation has its human roots in the mixed Adam stock.

Timothy's lineage is not exhausted by two good women. Of his father we know nothing, but the surmise is that he was Greek. If, then, there is talk of heritage, in the blood of Timothy a Greek and a Hebrew strain were mingled, and greater contrast and more probable antagonism could hardly be found.

Thus we are at the problem of heredity, and it is here that biology takes up the discussion. For long we grew accustomed to a determined scientific dogmatism, and we listened so meekly, and found the teaching so insistent and confident, that heredity and its problems became an obsession for more than one generation. But the biologist has shed much of the dogmatism, and is not nearly so sure as once. This is the conclusion of one of the foremost biologists of our day: 'What has the biologist to say? Little more than this, that, well-fated or ill-fated, each living creature is born a new creature—an individuality. There is variation as well as continuity, and the mould is, so to speak, broken each time. Each creature is a new creature. And in the case of man this seems to imply a personality with a will of its own to this extent, that it may or may not use possibilities of nurture in a manner quite unpredictable. The radius of freedom of choice may be long or short, but there is some freedom, *something unpredictable in the activity of each new child.*'

¶ James Lane Allen has a story of a young man who stood before the family portraits in his home. He was thinking particularly of two men at whom he was gazing. One was a man of austere and sterling character. The other was a gay and zestful devourer of all which allures the passionate taste. Each of these men was an ancestor of the young fellow who stood moodily looking upon their pictures. As he stood there he knew that those two old men were fighting inside him. They had got into his blood. And there they fought for the boy years and years after they were dead.[1]

3. There is the religious and Christian view to be stated, and it is no nerveless confronting of a fate, and no helpless bafflement by an enigma. To the Christian, heredity is no iron fate gripping and clamping the individual life in the vice of the past. If inherited evil has power, so has inherited good, and God is greater than any human inheritance, and keeps a power of surprise in His hands for use.

Lois and Eunice are not irrelevancies in the story of Timothy. What they were had much to do with what he was, or they would not have been named with this honour. 'To make a sound Christian of a Hindu,' said a missionary, 'you have got to convert his grandmother.' If it is our lot to be of good stock, let us give thanks for it every day we live. It is a great thing to be in the line of a spiritual aristocracy. Let us take it and acknowledge it as the prevenient love of God which made ready for our good, planting in us a quick spiritual sensitiveness.

¶ William W. Peyton, in an arresting book,

[1] L. H. Hough, *The Productive Beliefs*, 56.

Memorabilia of Jesus, has a final chapter with the daring title 'The Christ in our Blood.' He expounds our Lord's boundless faith in the unspoiled elements of our human nature. 'It is the standing danger of all civilizations,' he says, 'and it has been the grave of civilizations, that we forget the early moorland of our birth in the paved streets, stocked shops, bonded warehouses, halls of science, and the artificial lawns of our villas.' There are elements answering to Christ entwined in the primitive of us. And of the human sources of it, he has this to say: 'If you are an earnest man, your Christianity is a transmitted instinct. You have two thousand years of it in your blood.'

4. Yet beyond human heritage, and if need be in the teeth of it, there is an immediate and mightier Power available and at work, and every new thing that comes with every new life is open to the grace of its dealings. 'Something unpredictable in every new life,' says our biologist. That unpredictable is rooted in God. The law of human heritage is transformed and transfigured in the region of redemptive grace into a Divine heredity. At the close of the table of names in St. Luke's Gospel there is an astonishing utterance. Coming at the end of a dull list of births and deaths, it is a declaration staggering in its magnitude. If it is not true, it is a blasphemy, for it is a libel against God. If it is true, it is enough to shame us utterly in the thought of stain upon our kinship, and, at the same time, to bring a catch in the breath as at a sudden glimpse of potentialities beyond our measuring. 'Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.'

There are many things to say in answer to that sinister side of heredity we have been thinking about. That the power of it is limited is a fact verified by experiment and in experience. There is the denial that Nature is mightier than nurture, which was made on the authority of Dr. Barnardo, out of his unique experience in dealing with thousands of young lives. There is the fact that, whatever heredity is, it does not put an end to moral freedom and thus to moral responsibility. It may fix our trial but it does not fix our fate.

And there is a greater thing to remember. God, who gave to man his being, made him partake of His own nature. It is only in the fact that man is the child of God that sin gets meaning. It is for us to accept our sonship, to live in the consciousness of it, and in its strength and dignity. We need power for this, and that is what Christ brings—the power to be what we truly are; the power to fulfil our possibilities and reach our destiny.

This was the power Jesus gave and gives to those who believe in Him—a great lifting love, a mighty affection, a carrying enthusiasm, power to become sons of God. If so be that there comes to us, by the far or near human stock to which we belong, an invasion and pressure of God's grace in our very blood—that good thing which was committed unto us, guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. But if so be that no such reinforcement be ours, let none despair because of it, nor reckon the pull of lower things to be a fate. 'The Eternal has lodging in us; it is ours to turn it into a home.'

The Death of Death

2 Tim. i. 10.—'Our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel' (R.V.).

THE Easter message is like a diamond with many facets. It flashes its glory into our life in all directions. The more we look into it the deeper we see; the more it scatters the darkness which gathers upon our perplexing way. But the central light and heart of glory is its message about death; and its message about death is the message of all light about darkness—the discovery that it is not there.

1. The statement in the text was more than faith; it was experience. For three days Christ had been lost to His disciples in a grave, but Easter had brought Him back stronger and more radiant than ever. So far as their friendship with Christ was concerned, death had ceased to count. The world in which they walked with Him was a world from which death had disappeared. For the future, it did not enter into their calculations. This world of ours is pagan in many respects, but it is lit with the after-shine of the Resurrection. The Easter fact is in our blood, part of our Christian inheritance. It is part of Christ's great contribution to life. He hath abolished death. How is it done? Paul goes on to tell us. It is

done in the only way in which death can be abolished—by the revelation of life. He hath brought life and immortality to light.

R. L. Stevenson tells of a lad who was shipwrecked on an island in the West of Scotland. He was not very far from the mainland, which lay mocking him with its little homesteads and its look of smiling comfort, while he wandered on the islet—a prisoner—with the great deep closing him in. One day, when near the very depth of despair, he hailed a passing boat expecting to be taken off. In reply the fishermen only smiled and shouted some message which he found it difficult to catch, but at last the truth flashed into his mind. He ran to where the shore came nearest to the mainland, and found that the sea which had looked so deep was now sunk at low tide to a mere trickle of water across which he waded with ease. In a moment the sea's ugly threat of separation was abolished. The terror was only make-believe. What looked an impassable sea was really a ford. In the same way death is a small thing when you have seen Christ's vision of life. It is only a gateway to a larger world.

Death, the old serpent's son,
Thou hadst a sting once, like thy sire,
That carried hell, and ever-burning fire:
But those black days are done;
Thy foolish spite buried thy sting
In the profound and wide
Wound of the Saviour's side:
And now thou art become a tame and harmless thing,
A thing we dare not fear——
Since we hear
That our triumphant God to punish thee,
For the affront thou didst Him on the tree,
Hath snatched the keys of hell out of thy hand,
And made thee stand
A porter to the gate of life, thy mortal enemy.[1]

2. Now let us go deeper. How does Christ bring immortality to light? It is the same process as occurs in the making of any great discovery, of such a physical fact, for instance, as electricity or wireless telegraphy.

(1) The first thing that happens is *the quickening of a desire*. The heart must be awakened to need it and to demand it. The first thoughts of wireless telegraphy, for example, came to man's mind a century ago, but the demand for it did not arise till ordinary telegraphy had advanced some distance and the world had come to depend upon it. A break took place in a cable and business was thrown out of gear. In desperation they sought to send messages, which they found reached spasmodically from one broken end of the cable to the other and made a continuous current; and the minds of the scientists were sent exploring in a new world waiting to be conquered. The same thing happened to Columbus in the discovery of America. He saw a plant on the shore one day that quickened his mind and sent his heart out dreaming of some farther coast which he felt must be across the water. As some one says of him, 'The instinct of an unknown continent burned in his blood.'

That is what Christ does for us with regard to immortality. The instinct is in our blood and Christ awakens it. We were made for a higher sphere than this death-girt island we call earth. Christ awakens the dormant instinct for the infinite. How does He do it? For one thing He quickens our sense of the value of our own personality. When Christ comes in, we begin to count for something. We begin to count 'one.' We become a soul, a self, with a value which is infinite. It becomes unthinkable that we should die, should perish, should pass down into the dust of decay and extinction. He awakens the same instinct by increasing the value of the great things of life—our love, for instance, to one another. He enriches the vital human affections which are the very salt of life.

¶ In a letter to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, Cowper ended with these words: 'There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be, yours for ever, William Cowper.'

And Christ awakens the instinct of immortality by setting us tasks which we cannot half see finished, which, in fact, with only one life before us, it seems hardly worth beginning. Cecil Rhodes was no orthodox believer, but life had touched his soul with the glory of a great task, and his last words were these, 'So little done, so much to do.' That is the protest which Christ awakens in us. When He comes

[1] Jeremy Taylor.

into a man's life, however dull and dispirited, the first thing that happens to that man is that he becomes aware of a motive for living which earth itself cannot supply.

(2) The second thing which needs to be done in making a great discovery is to *open the mind to believe in it.* Some time ago a well-known scientist came into full possession of the Christian faith. For years he had longed to be a Christian. Jesus Christ drew his heart like a magnet; his soul demanded faith, his life cried out for it, but he could find no room in his mind for miraculous Christianity. He describes himself as like a man standing on the brink of a river looking for a way to cross and watching for some thought which might become a bridge. When the outlook came which removed the difficulty in his mind he crossed over in gladness to give himself to Christ. The same thing holds with regard to immortality—the mind must be open to take it in. Here Christ comes to our aid by the fact of the Resurrection. Doubts have been cast upon the story by many people in the last 1900 years, but the fact has persisted—and why? We may dispute the empty grave and certain details in the story; one thing we cannot dispute—the fact that the disciples were changed by something which was big enough to make them utterly different men. What spiritual power was behind their new-made lives? The explanation is that life was brought to light, and death was shattered. If there is one who finds it difficult to believe in the future life because of his view of the universe, here is a plain fact challenging the mind. What are we going to make of it? If our scheme of things is one that will not hold Jesus—risen and living—it is time our mental world were smashed in pieces and rebuilt. There is only one outlook on the world which is valid to-day, or worthy of a thinking man facing the facts of life. This little world of physical force is but a fragment of a great spiritual universe where Christ is Lord, and death a door that leads to a larger room in the great mansion of life. We need to revise our ideas and find an outlook that is big enough to take in the risen Jesus. The more we look at Him, and the closer we come to Him, the more He will make a place for Himself which is all His own. By the fact of His rising Christ brings immortality to light.

I know
There is no death, 'tis but a phantom fear
That haunts the soul apart from God.
Christ Rose.
The stone was rolled away, and echoing,
His voice startled Death's sentry guards.
'Behold,
I live for ever, and have cast the keys
Of Hell into the bottomless abyss.'
Lift up your heads, ye golden gates, for all
To enter in who will to walk the Way.
Christ lives, and round the living Christ new worlds
Burn to their birth in light, new triumph songs
Make music 'mid the silent stars, and swell,
Like ocean's thunder on a sounding shore,
Life! Life! More Life! Christ lives for evermore.[1]

(3) But lastly, there is the possession of the final secret, the assurance of the man who is brought to say, 'I know.' How does Christ make us sure of immortality? It is a spiritual secret. The final assurance of immortality is not an argument of the mind; it is a conviction of the heart—the experience of a life already victorious over the tyranny of earth. It is reached through faith by those who will trust Christ and let that experience bring its own conclusions. The scientist has to make experiments before he can be sure of his discovery, and not only once but again and again, till bit by bit the results pile up and the thing can be put upon the market. Even he has to use faith, to take a certain risk of wasting his time and his money. There is no other way to final certainty of any great truth but the way of practical experiment. The man who takes no risks discovers no certainties. The assurance of immortality is a product of experience of the love of God which comes through trusting Christ; and trusting that love means committing our life to its promises and its challenges and its rebukes. What happens then? Our souls break into life as a tree into leaf in every bough with the coming of the spring sunlight. And the life which is eternal is born in our souls.

This life brings its own assurance. It stirs the conviction that in the love of God revealed in Jesus we are in contact with a love and care which is eternal. That is the only final guarantee. Immortality is a spiritual fact, and you cannot

[1] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Songs of Faith and Doubt.*

prove a spiritual fact except by spiritual perceptions. The real assurance of the future life lies not in deeper explorations of psychic marvels, impressive though these may be; it lies in exploring in daily fellowship with Jesus the marvel of the love of God. No man can interpret for another in what ways this assurance will come to him. There are certain well-defined ways—the sense of peace, the assurance of forgiveness, bubbling up sometimes like a fountain, in tears of thankfulness. Varied experiences of God come through the changing weather of life.

¶ In a Sussex novel there is a story of a man of sordid life who had been seeking God and at last found Him in the glory of a summer morning when he had come to the end of himself and had gone out to make an end. God rose that morning in the beauty of those flowers and grasses as Christ rose from the dead, and broke into his soul with the unutterable sense of a living personal love. Not long after, he lay dying as the result of an accident, but there was hardly any tinge of sadness in his outlook. 'It seems to me,' he said, 'that when I go to God, I am going into the very middle of all that's alive; seems to me that when I go to God, I can never lose the month of May.'

There is no other way of certainty except what comes through faith. We 'could wish for more,' like Dr Johnson. But no more comes, except what faith brings. If more were given us, we would lose that struggle of faith which keeps us alive. All living faith is something for which we have to do battle with what we call the facts of life. And the certainty of immortality is one we have to live for and may have to fight for. It is a living certainty which grows bit by bit and changes its face and sometimes dies, only to be reborn if we keep on fighting for it, trusting it; for 'faith,' says Chesterton, 'is the perpetually defeated thing that survives all its conquerors.'

The Investment of a Ministry

2 Tim. i. 11, 12.—'Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

1. Apart from the particular reference and personal application of the Apostle's words, there are at least two underlying convictions expressed in them to which we may give heed because of their lasting value. One is a conviction about living, and the other a conviction about life. When a man of long experience and complete sincerity writes like this, it means that behind his uttered self, behind his conception of his own particular office, behind his strenuous endeavours to realize it in service and sacrifice, lie some basal convictions about life itself, and how living is to be regarded. He is pondering what he has tried to be and do, and incidentally, in his description of this as it appears to his eyes, there emerges a revelation of certain fundamental estimates which have been shaping his history. Living as a trust, and life as a security are the two unspoken but implied convictions.

(1) First, he had felt that living was a trust, an opportunity, a call to venture something out upon life. It is an investor's figure of speech in which he states it. He calls what he has been and what he has done, the sum of his activities and influence, 'my deposit.' He has counted right living as a contribution to life's capitalized good. He knows himself infinitely a debtor, yet he dares to believe that in the books one day to be opened a credit page is being filled with what he calls 'my deposit.'

Here is the feeding spring of worthy living, a conception without which no life can come to anything but feebleness and futility. We are not here to be recipients only, like Longfellow's monk:

> Placid, satisfied, serene,
> Looking down upon the scene,
> Wondering unto what good end
> All this toil and traffic tend,
> And why all men cannot be
> Free from care and free from pain. . . .
> And as indolent as he.

As an investor handles capital we are to handle this gift of living, only not for our own wealth, save as we share the wealth of the whole which we have faithfully striven to increase.

(2) The second underlying conviction is a conviction about life. As living is an investment, life is good security, worth putting our best into; and our best may be counted safe when so ventured. This man went a step further than that living was a trust; he felt that life

itself was trustworthy, and would in the long run play no honest investment false. There is very much in life, as every one of us knows it, to make us feel sometimes that we are dealing with a terribly insecure thing, in which a man's best may come to nothing. Good men have lived nobly, and it has seemed as if life mocked them. They have died, and the causes they had lived to serve have seemed no whit furthered, and every virtue they possessed and every victory won has seemed like a vapour dissipated and lost. They let their light shine and the stray inconsequent winds blew it about, and at last blew it out, and the darkness seemed as before, but deeper for the brief candle.

The Apostle was not ignorant of this aspect of life. Life was not growing kindlier to him as he grew old. It had spelt homelessness, disappointments, buffetings for him, and quite soon it would write 'Finis' to the tale of his years, and write it in blood in the dark of a dungeon. Small wonder if he should think of life as Rabelais thought of eternity—as 'the grand Perhaps.' But it was not so. Still he held the unshaken confidence that life was an opportunity far more than a risk, and he was sure that he had not been duped in putting into it his best. That deposit had been lodged where it was in God's keeping, with whom no good thing is lost. 'I am persuaded that he is able to guard my deposit against that day.' It is not the men who put toil and sweat and blood into making life great who feel that life is mean. To such the world is no blot or blank, but means intensely and means good, because it means God.

2. The Apostle, however, is talking of his own individual calling and service when he says: 'I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.' He is speaking with his wonted glow of the gospel of Jesus Christ, 'whereunto,' he says, 'I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles.' A fourth term he adds to the description—'for which cause I also suffer'—and this is the investment he regards as securely lodged and effectively guarded.

(1) 'Whereunto I am appointed a preacher.' The preacher's investment first—the deposit of the speaker for Christ and His gospel. Very faithful has he been to this appointment, and he has daring to believe with absolute confidence that his speaking forth of the Word of life has not vanished in the empty air. It is not lost, but lodged. When one thinks of it, this is a triumph of assurance, for there is nothing that seems more fugitive, nothing so easily nullified and defeated by incidental circumstances in the preacher, the hearer, and even in the place and time, than preaching. The preacher's faith and conviction, his whole self at its highest and best, may have gone into it, yet when it is done, what is there? Whether it will count for much, for little, for nothing, he does not know. The times are not seldom when he will feel constrained to say, 'I have spent my strength for naught.' If the preacher is to triumph over such reflecting it can be only by the Apostle's way: 'I am appointed a preacher. I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.'

¶ Even John Wesley had experience of a mood that comes to every minister at times. 'The congregation seemed much moved,' he wrote one evening in his Journal. 'I really believe that, if they do not take great care, they may remember it—for nearly a week!'

(2) 'I am appointed an apostle.' We need not insist upon clear-cut distinctions or wire-draw such as appear. An apostle is the bearer of a message, and so is also the preacher. But there is an added thought in the mind of St Paul when he distinguishes here, and when, as in the second chapter, he says, 'I am ordained a preacher and an apostle.' The added thought is of a representative. 'Apostolos' is an ambassador, who may carry a message, but who, whether with this or without it, represents another. This man has been conscious that in his life he has stood for another. His ministry has been more than his message; his responsibility has been larger than his utterance. What he was himself, in all that made his personality, the influence of his character, his bearing, his very looks, had been either reflecting or misrepresenting his Lord.

¶ 'As long as men have eyes as well as ears,' wrote that noble Pastor, Richard Baxter, 'they will think they see your meaning as well as hear it; and they are more apt to believe their sight than their hearing, as being the more perfect sense. All that a preacher doth is a kind of preaching.' [1]

[1] *Reformed Pastor*, 73.

Quite consciously the Apostle had thus lived, recognizing that, apart from his speech, his character and personality had counted, and that this influence and outflow was part of his deposit. He was certain it was not lost, but was lodged under good security, and we may count ourselves happy if the like confidence gives us the like joy, and be assured that, without our distinct volition, what we *are* is counting, and is in the guard of Him who appointeth ambassadors.

(3) 'And a teacher of the Gentiles,' a pioneer, a handler and shaper of adverse or indifferent material. In this is gathered all that constitutes the relationship of the minister of Christ to the outsider. What he says in speech to such may be much or little according to his opportunity and his particular gift. But what he is will teach more, and all the time. The Apostle is sure that in relation to the outsider his ministry has not been lost. He has put it out as he could, in speech where he might, in truth planted where he could, in influence always. A hard ground this, and where most is given there is apt to be no sign. But such as he could he has given, and it is out as a venture of which he dares to be sure of the issue, since he is sure of his Lord.

To guard a deposit is more than to keep it; it is to multiply it. Herein is the minister's comfort against his consciousness of poverty and incapacity compared with the greatness of his calling and the wealth of his theme. It is at once the most humbling and the most heartening discovery the preacher of the evangel makes, that God's way is to get most out of what he has deemed meanest, and to do with what he has judged trivial, perhaps not without reason, more than he conceived could be done with his best. Goethe was prouder of a certain scientific theory of his, which happened to be a false one, than of all the writings by which he won his immortality. A great Christian bishop wrote much in his time of controversial theology, and doubtless deemed his books and his famous sermons his real deposit; incidentally he wrote an evening hymn, 'Glory to Thee, my God, this night.' The sermons are forgotten, and the dust is undisturbed on the books, but the simple song is still the evening psalm of little children and of all who have the child-spirit and are of the Kingdom. Of the discoveries of 'that day' one may well be, how little is our best; but perhaps for very many the greater surprise will be how much God has been able to make out of their poverty.

Certain amidst Uncertainties

2 Tim. i. 12.—'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

In the world of to-day certainties, like gilt-edged securities, are few and far between. None of us knows what a day or an hour may bring forth; and our very beliefs about life and man and much else have been rudely shaken. The foundation of things seems sometimes to rock beneath our feet and there seems nothing stable and unchanging to which to cling.

It is for that reason that Paul's utterance has a special attraction for us. He claimed to know Someone who was unchanging and unchangeable, whose loyalty he could count upon whatever befell, whose grace would be sufficient whatever his need, whose presence would accompany him all the days. It was that certainty that enabled Paul, in a life singularly beset by uncertainties, to face everything that might happen to him with enviable composure. 'I am persuaded,' he wrote to the Romans on one occasion, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' The worst might happen to him, he might be bereft of his most trusted friends and lose the most important of his possessions, but, through all chance and change, he would adhere to the belief that love is at the heart of the universe and purpose in control of it.

Is there one of us who does not covet such assurance? Is there one of us who can gainsay that, could we possess it, the fears which clutch at our hearts in such a world as ours would lose something of their terror?

Covet such assurance as we do, however, there may be questions in many of our minds concerning it. Upon what was it based? Had it any foundation in reality, or was it simply the product of wishful thinking? Did Paul

believe that love is at the heart of the universe and purpose is in control of it because it was comforting to believe that, or because there was some reliable evidence in support of such a belief? To many of us such questions seem important. It is not that we are averse to possessing an assurance. On the contrary, an assurance is what we most earnestly seek. But we want to be sure that an assurance *is* an assurance and not just make-believe.

Recently a most interesting book, entitled *Towards Belief in God*, was written by Professor Farmer of Cambridge. In one of his chapters he deals with what he calls 'the elements of conviction,' with how we come to know and to accept something as true. 'There is first,' he says, 'what may be called a compulsive or coercive element. There is second what may be called a practical or pragmatic element. There is third what may be called a reflective element. If a belief,' he continues, '(1) shines in its own light with a certain inherent compellingness, (2) "works" in the sense of both satisfying our nature and of helping in the practical task of managing our world, (3) reveals on examination both internal consistencies and external harmony with other experience and knowledge, then we have in regard to it as full an assurance of truth as it is possible for a human mind to have and as it ought ever to ask.'

Into Paul's conviction concerning Jesus all three elements which Professor Farmer mentions entered. He claimed to know whom he had believed and to place implicit trust in Him, not simply because he wanted to, or found it comforting so to do, but because there was a certain compellingness in Jesus, because His gospel worked and because that same gospel made sense of life and of the universe in which it has to be lived.

Suppose we take these three elements of Paul's conviction one by one.

1. First, he trusted Jesus implicitly *because of a certain compellingness in Jesus.*

There are certain facts, all of us would admit, which, once we hear them stated, we immediately accept as true. They are so obviously sound that they require neither elucidation nor argument. There are, too, certain people whom we feel instinctively, even on a first meeting, we can trust. We have never any desire to put them on probation before making them the repository of our secrets. There is a soundness and a wholesomeness about them which, from our first contact with them, invites our confidence. Such facts and such people, the philosophers would say, have a certain compellingness: they shine in their own light. We accept the one and trust the other, not because we have convinced ourselves by argument that the one deserves to be accepted, and the other to be trusted, but because something in *them* makes an immediate appeal to something in *us*. Montaigne, you may remember, questioned concerning his affection for a particular friend, said, 'If I am pressed to give a reason why I loved him, I find it cannot be expressed otherwise than by saying, "Because it was he; because it was I."'

Such facts must be borne in mind when we question the basis of Paul's belief in Jesus, how he came to trust Him so implicitly. Just as we, in our daily contacts, constantly feel the compellingness of certain people, so Paul, confronted by Him, felt the compellingness of Jesus. He had that soundness and wholesomeness which, from the first, invited his confidence. He had the look of One who, having given His word, could be counted upon to fulfil it. When He spoke, His voice had a ring of sincerity indicating that He said what He meant and meant what He said. Paul felt at once that he knew Him, and, knowing Him, could trust Him and, trusting Him, could commit his life unreservedly into His keeping.

Have we who have envied Paul's composure in face of the worst that life might do to him and yet have questioned on what his assurance was founded ever looked Jesus in the face as we once looked our now trusted friends in the face? We have talked about Him and have heard talk about Him, but have we looked at Him for ourselves? If we haven't, can we be surprised that we lack Paul's confidence and are uncertain where he was so absolutely sure?

2. But, secondly, Paul trusted Jesus implicitly *because His gospel 'worked' in his own experience.*

'No assertion of truth or fact,' says Professor Farmer in the book from which we have already quoted, 'however intrinsically plausible and compelling, is worth very much if it is not backed by experimental verification through action.'

And that, of course, is a point worth remembering. Perhaps as we spoke of people possessing a certain compellingness some minds began to think of certain people who had that compellingness which invited confidence but who led them on only to deceive them in the end. Men and women are not always what they seem and some who are most attractive on a first meeting persuade us by their later conduct that first impressions are not always correct. With that in mind, we, while we acknowledge the compellingness of Jesus, may demand something more before we implicitly trust Him. Does He actually give what He promises to give? Is He all that He appears to be? The answers to such questions, Paul found, were in the affirmative. Jesus did for him all He promised to do and enabled him to live so triumphantly that he won Paul's loyalty and devotion for ever and a day.

This second element in Paul's conviction, the practical, or the pragmatic according to the philosophers, the fact that the gospel of Jesus worked in his own experience, must be borne in mind when we question the foundation of his certainty. All down the years that same element has been persuading men and women that Jesus is One in whom they can place their confidence. Because Jesus has done for them what He promised to do, men and women have put their faith in Him. Thinking of that, Professor Farmer, in another of his books, declares that 'the supreme apologetic for the Christian faith, even from the point of view of the soberest philosophy, is that consistent living in the light of it does on the whole succour our best selves, does give us courage in face of life's tasks, and does possess our hearts with the peace which Paul said passes all understanding: in short, that it satisfies the whole of us in a way that nothing else can. And when a man finds his mind growing clearer, his passions less disorderly, his fears less obsessive, his temptations less seductive, his joy and peace more permanent, and all these a genuine Christian does find, he never has any doubt that somewhere or other he has been, through Christ, in naked contact with the truth.'

It was along that line that Paul's conviction concerning Jesus grew. We who envy him his assurance, yet question whether it was solidly founded, have got to bear that in mind. He trusted Him because he had proved Him in his own experience. If we cannot trust Jesus as Paul trusted Him, therefore, it may not be because Jesus is not deserving of such trust as Paul reposed in Him but because we have never actually put Him to the test. Try Him, Paul seems to suggest, and see if, by the way He fulfils the simplest of His promises, He does not constrain you to trust Him to the uttermost.

3. But, thirdly, Paul trusted Jesus *because*, when he reflected upon it, *His gospel made sense of life and of the universe in which it has to be lived.*

There are few who do not acknowledge that, if the world could be persuaded to live as Jesus indicated men should live, a happier day would dawn for all. His principles, if high, are sound. They make sense, sense of life and sense of the world. Because they made sense for Paul, because on reflection they appealed to his reason, he chose, being so convinced, to trust Jesus absolutely. Any one who propounded the solid principles which Jesus propounded deserved to be trusted—trusted to the uttermost.

In giving himself to Jesus because, on reflection, he found His principles appeal to his reason, did Paul do any more than the average man does under similar circumstances? What causes the average man to follow some chosen leader? Perhaps his compellingness, perhaps the fact that he does what he promises to do, perhaps—and this is our point at the moment—because, on reflection, he considers what the leader says to be sound. Of course there are some who, while acknowledging the soundness of Jesus' principles, aver that He leaves many mysteries unsolved. Which is true. Even Paul admitted that. But is there *any* philosophy of life which rids life of all mystery and leaves us with no problems on our hands? And are we so sure that the Christian attitude to life leaves more problems unsolved than any other attitude to life? Paul, thinking of those mysteries to which no mortal man holds the keys, was prepared to trust where he could not see and to follow when he did not know whither the road might lead because, where he could see and know, he found Jesus utterly sound and reliable.

We who envy Paul's assurance, yet question whether it was securely founded, had better bear the fact of Paul's reflection in mind. We may lack the certainty which he possessed, not

simply because we have never taken time to look Jesus full in His wonderful face, nor simply because we have never put Him to the test, but because we have never seriously reflected upon the gospel He proclaimed. How can we know Jesus if we have never thought about Him? And how can we have assurance if we have never reflected upon the gospel He proclaimed? And if we have neither considered nor reflected, on what ground can we declare that Paul's certainty was only wishful thinking?

These are days, we have already admitted, when one certainty, one stable, unchanging and unchangeable thing would make all the difference. It would increase our courage, endurance, and patience. And can such a certainty be had? Yes, it can. Confront yourself with the compellingness of Jesus, put Him to the test for yourself, reflect upon the gospel He proclaimed, and see if you cannot say, even in a world in which many things are shaken: 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

RODERICK BETHUNE.

A Friend in Need

2 Tim. i. 16.—'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.'

Timotheus, when here and there you go
Through Ephesus upon your pastoral round,
Where every street to me is hallowed ground,
I will be bold and ask you to bestow
Kindness upon one home where long ago
A helpmate lived, whose like is seldom found,
And when the sweet spring flowers begin to blow,
Sometimes for me lay one upon his mound.[1]

St Paul was never prone to indiscriminate praise or blame. He had greater matters in hand than the strewing of compliments even upon his coadjutors in the proclamation of the Christian gospel. Hence we may assume that the singularly cordial words he speaks of Onesiphorus are the product of deep and manly feeling.

Probably it was the sense of contrast that reminded St Paul of Onesiphorus just here. He had been speaking of certain apostates who fell away miserably, and may have dragged down others in their fall. And to the Apostle the bitterest thought of all was not that they had deserted him, but that they had deserted Christ their Saviour. Some people are apt to identify attachment to them with attachment to Jesus Christ; but that is always a wrong and a mistake. We all have our own personal faults, some of them sufficiently repellent; and it will never do to talk as if persons who are out of sympathy with us—with whom, in the familiar phrase, we cannot 'get on'—are for that reason out of sympathy with Jesus. St Paul had nothing of this pettiness of mind. No doubt he broke off from Barnabas over the weak fondness that good man felt for his runaway nephew, John Mark; but it would have startled him to be told that because Barnabas had parted with him he had parted with Christ also. But with Phygellus and Hermogenes, traitors whom he names in the previous verse, it was another story. They had left the Master first, and the servant only in consequence; and it was over the first of these events, not the second, that St Paul grieved most keenly. In the same way it was not Onesiphorus' personal fidelity to him that struck the deepest chord in his nature, or gave him greatest satisfaction; it was the loyalty to Christ that shone out in the kindness of his friend.

Let us look, then, at St Paul's words concerning this man. Onesiphorus means 'bringer of help'; so that in this instance at least name and nature coincide; for it was the promptness and the richness of the help he brought that went to Paul's heart.

1. First, consider Onesiphorus in the rôle of *a Christian friend*. One of the qualities in him which these verses specially underline is the consistency of his helpfulness. That came out originally in the three years St Paul gave to Ephesus. During that period Onesiphorus proved himself, steadily, one of those priceless collaborators in religious work—men who can be trusted to stick to the duty they take up, instead of casting it aside when the glamour of novelty has worn off, or the first group of difficulties emerge. Men of this stamp act in character wherever they may be; and with

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

Onesiphorus it was so, obviously, for when he came to Rome, and learnt that the Apostle was in trouble, his steady kindliness and love were manifest at once. St Paul lay in prison, incarcerated so closely, it is probable, that he would take some searching for; but the trusty Ephesian never rested till he had tracked him to his cell, and grasped his hand.

One of the saddest things about human virtue, and even about much moral excellence in Christians, is just that you can't depend on it. To-day it bears the strain, to-morrow it breaks down. Once out of the old groove, away from the familiar scene, it is itself no longer; it takes the line of least resistance and shirks its duty. All the more inspiring is it to encounter a man like this, as, thank God, we do so often—zealous, beneficent, firm, the same faithful comrade in the years when St Paul toiled night and day in Ephesus and in the dark months when he lay rusting in a dungeon, the same true helper at home and in the foreign city. Let good men feel that they may reckon on our aid; let them feel that when the needy require help, or the forces of evil must be flung back, they may count on us every time, and we shall be a strength, not a weakness, to the Saviour's cause.

¶ Jesus pictured a sheepfold with a hundred sheep. One went astray. Let me say with all the emphasis of my being, 'Thank God for the ninety and nine!' . . . How grateful I am to find the ninety-and-nine group that has refused to leave the Good Shepherd. I speak of that group of church-members among us that was sought and found by the Good Shepherd when 'wounded and helpless and ready to die,' but thus shepherded, those sheep followed Him, served Him and have remained under His shepherding care. As a pastor, everywhere I go I try to be thankful with a continuous gratitude for the ninety-and-nine, the faithful few, the dependables, the men, women, boys and girls, who like trees are 'planted' and rooted and grounded in their devotion, consecration, constancy, and service to Christ.[1]

Two features in Onesiphorus' conduct at Rome touched St Paul with peculiar gratitude.

(1) In the first place, *he took pains to help his friend.* 'He sought me out very diligently, and found me.' It is true that most people will do a kind turn if the occasion comes their way, if they trip right over an urgent case, and cannot well avoid doing something. But there is no quick eye for openings. Until distress is flung in their path by accident, they wait and wait, and might as well not be in the world at all. Often they are quite good-natured people, with intentions of the very best kind; but their chance is small of winning that great commendation at the last: 'I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' They fail to consider that if God had waited until sinners found Him, we should be in an evil plight; instead of that, in Jesus Christ He sought us out very diligently and found us, He came to seek and save the lost.

(2) Then, besides that, *Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul*; and *that* memory the Apostle treasured with a rare depth of gratitude. Evidently he was used to having people ashamed of him. It was all part of being a Christian. But to treat him so never crossed Onesiphorus' mind. To know St Paul was the pride of his life.

On the surface, no doubt, the situation has undergone a change since then, but perhaps it is a change more in appearance than in reality. Touch the nerve of worldliness still, and you find a hatred of Jesus Christ; and if we are going to put ourselves, steadily and with conviction, on the side of men who take the will of Jesus Christ as their supreme moral authority, we shall discover soon enough, by painful but blessed experience, that the offence of the Cross has not ceased, but merely a little altered its forms. Only it is worth while to bear it—the reward far outweighs the pain—and what a rush of new life and freedom it would bring to many had they but the courage to identify themselves outright with some down-trodden but noble cause and be sharers in its coming triumph.

¶ 'Upon one notable occasion,' the biographer of Francis Crossley writes, 'when he was on the bench of magistrates, he was called on to take part in the trial of a Salvation Army girl for obstructing the public thoroughfare. When the case was called, Crossley left his seat on the bench, and took his stand by the side of the Army girl in the dock.'

2. Note, secondly, *how much this kindness meant to Paul.* No one has ever lived more completely human than the Apostle to the

[1] Richard L. Shipley.

Gentiles. The desire for friendship became at times with him almost a physical craving. So think of the shock of pleasure that came to the solitary captive when one day his cell-door swung back, and in strode this trusty henchman, all the way from Asia. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Months later it makes the old man's heart thrill to think of all it had meant, and he pours out intercessions for Onesiphorus in this life and the next.

¶ In the life of Professor Henry Drummond a letter of Mr Robert Barbour is quoted in which he tells how Drummond descended upon him unexpectedly in his Aberdeenshire manse, and together they snatched the rare delight of a walk through the autumn woods, with blue hills and purple moors in the distance. And then the letter ends: 'There followed a chat, face to face, and heart to heart, by the study fire, and a solemn moment of prayer. And so the Bird of Paradise spread his wings, and I saw him no more.'

The tedium of solitude; anxiety for churches over half the world; the sense of desertion, it may be, when last he faced the cruel Emperor Nero—it was into the midst of these darkening shadows that the brave Ephesian came, with attentive love and the infectious good cheer of Christian faith. Not once only, but again and again he came; 'he sought me out diligently, he oft refreshed me.'

This, then, is friendship; and friendship rises to its highest point only when the two comrades are followers of Jesus Christ. Some modern writers would persuade us that friendship is a grace of human life which attained the very flower of its perfectness in the old pagan world; whereas Christianity, by claiming the first place in our heart for God, has destroyed something of its innocent and unconscious beauty, and cast a shadow over its joy. Yet is it not clear that precisely the opposite is true? Is it not clear that it is as lit up by the Christian revelation that this dear human custom, friendship, appears in all its depth and preciousness? Who save believers can be certain that their friendship will last for ever? And where can hearts and minds be at one so utterly as those that are at one about God and Christ? Built together on the Rock of Ages, they cherish hopes, interests, convictions, personal ideals which are fundamentally the same; and this because the same Lord and Master is He by whom they live and in whom they hope to die. It makes them glad and strong to know that they will be always the more to each other the closer they draw to Him who is Redeemer and King of both.

3. And now, note *how St Paul repaid the other's kindness*. In one word, he prayed for him; he took his name in love to the throne of God; and this is the best recompense any of us can make for sympathy or help. If we do a service to a neighbour, he may pay us money for it, or he may do us a like service some day; yet there are better things than these to be had of human gratitude. St Paul had now no money wherewith to pay, although some scholars hold him to have once been a wealthy man, but, like Peter at the Gate Beautiful, he could say: 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee.' So, by his prayers, though poor he made Onesiphorus rich. The prayers of any one are worth having, but especially the prayers of a man of God. If we are wise, we will covet the intercessions of those whose feet often tread that secret path. Says a saint of the seventeenth century, writing to an acquaintance who lived by habit in fellowship with God: 'When you have the King's ear, remember me': and surely each of us has at least one friend from whom we also might beg this kindness.

And if we covet intercession, let us be sure that we offer it liberally on behalf of others. We are deep in debt to so many for their care and love; we are surrounded by so many who are fighting a hard battle, and whose strength is nearly breaking; we have tempted men among our friends: and what better can we do than bring their case to God, and spread it out before Him? We can ask Him to bless those that have been kind; we can ask Him to protect those that are weak; we can do these things, and if we can, why, then, we ought to. Such time and care are never lost, for, as Samuel Rutherford long ago put it, 'I seldom made an errand to God for another, but I got something for myself.'

¶ The Rev. H. Bisseker wrote of Forbes Robinson, the Cambridge don: 'Prayer to him meant more than a light repetition of words. He used often, I believe, to spend as long as half an hour at a time in seeking blessing for a single man. We cannot doubt that, in

the strong influence which he himself exerted upon so many of those who knew him, such persistent prayer received at least a part of its own answer.'

Our Share of Hardness

2 Tim. ii. 3.—'Take thy part in suffering hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus' (R.V. margin).

St Paul was in Rome, in prison, awaiting his second trial, when he sent this message to Timothy, who, we may suppose, was going on with his work in the valley of the Lycus. Thus St Paul had the advantage of position: he had the initiative, as we say nowadays of another, yet not conflicting, warfare. For although Timothy can have had no easy time contending for 'The Christian View of God and the World' in a district and community which St John the Divine compendiously described as the Headquarters of Satan, nevertheless, if burdens of the soul can be weighed or measured, it will not be denied that one like St Paul, who, as he wrote, was in prison awaiting a trial in a prejudiced court, a trial which led to his execution, had the right to speak as he did to another who, as a minister of Christ, then or now must lay his account with the contradiction of sinners!

Timothy was a young man, affectionate and sensitive in temperament. St Paul knows how his young son in the faith, if he is speaking out the words which God gives him, will be provoking dislike and estrangement amongst his hearers, and the hostility of all whom he rebukes; so that his position will become more and more lonely. He knows, too—for has he not felt the same and cried out of the darkness?—how, more than others, a highly strung nervous man, who has no great fund of health, is liable to sudden fits of gloom when the battle seems quite lost. Therefore with all delicacy, yet with plainness of speech, he seeks to fortify the soul of Timothy against his besieging circumstances. 'Be brave,' he says, 'take thy share of hardness like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

¶ The Authorized Version is wrong in making Paul say to Timothy, 'Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ': the middle voice means '*Take your share* of hardship,' a proof this, that we should all go in for it. 'Cheer up! the worst has yet to come!' was the old first-century call from brother to brother because they were all in for it and not a select few.[1]

1. It may seem to some of us—and there are moods when it will seem to all of us—that this command 'take thy share of hardness' is too strong and, one might even say, unsympathetic. We could have wished that the Apostle had added some consolation; for example, had he hinted that the hardness would soon pass and things would become easier. Or he might have gone on to explain that hardness is God's discipline of us all—thus lighting up Timothy's difficulties by showing him God's intention. Some such addition as that to his short brusque command would, we think, have improved it and given comfort and endurance to Timothy.

But that is just our mistake. The fact is that nothing brings such composure to the human soul in all its most testing hours as to hear an unqualified *command*. Most of our misery arises from doubt. We are wretched usually because we are undecided. Are we at our proper work? Ought we to bear certain things which are lying heavily upon us, or should we cast them off if we can? Should we hold on, or should we give up the struggle? Nothing so relieves the soul, and clears its outlook, as to receive an order, a command, which it is not possible for us to avoid. We are never really troubled by the things which we simply must do or which we simply must bear. We are troubled only by things about which we are not sure whether we ought to do them or bear them, or not. When we have received a peremptory command—either through the circumstances of our life, or from some sublime inspiration within our own soul—then our course is clear and, because the thing must be done, it is done easily. The inevitable is easily borne.

The Apostle adds nothing in the way of comfort. He makes no attempt to explain why hardness has come to Timothy and must come to us all. No; with his profound knowledge of the human soul, he is aware that explanations do not help us in the real moments of our life; that nothing helps except to meet the hard things, commending oneself to God. The only light which is of use to us, which can warm our hearts in their solitude or suffering, is not the light which comes from some theory

[1] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 279.

which we may have about the value of trials and the meaning of pain, but the quiet light of faith which is born within us when we submit to our hard thing as coming from God.

¶ We read in the letters of Charles Lamb, how, on that awful night when Mary, his sister, lost her reason and killed her own mother, Charles sat through the long night alone and wrote a letter to Coleridge. It is a brave letter, written in appalling circumstances. In a few days he received a reply from Coleridge. The philosopher, after expressing his sympathy, goes on to explain the high benefit which even such a terrible providence may bring to him; how the enduring of such pains is the way by which a man tastes the Divine Nature, and becomes detached from worldly things—and so forth. But Lamb replied angrily to his friend, bidding him cease from all such unreal and untimely words, and said in effect: 'I get no help from what you say about rising into the Divine Nature through suffering. Indeed such language offends me and seems to me not to be fitting language for mortal men as we are. My one comfort, the one thing which consoles me is, now that the heavy blow has fallen upon me, to commit myself to God under it, to bear it and not to blaspheme.'

2. Although the Apostle does not in any way soften his command, nevertheless in his words he suggests to us—and must have suggested to Timothy—two thoughts which must put an end to all complaining.

(1) 'Take your share of hardness like a good soldier of Christ.' '*Like a good soldier of Christ.*' It is as though he had said, However others may shrink from the hardness of life, fancying that God had sent them into this world with the one idea that they should have a pleasant time here, it can never be the view of those who take their principles of living from Jesus Christ. However dimly we may see the meaning of Christ's sufferings, we do see in them this law, that only through sacrifice, only through the travail of souls, only through the surrendering of ourselves for others' sakes, does the Kingdom go forward. We, therefore, who follow Christ have no right to be astonished that hard things come. They are the things most surely promised to us: without them we could not breathe the real Christian air. 'You are a soldier of Jesus Christ,' said Paul to Timothy—and the world is no parading ground but a battlefield and place of striving. And so it should be enough for us, if ever we grow reluctant or bitter because hard things will not remove, to remember Christ, and to remind ourselves that we are not here to enjoy ourselves but to do something, perhaps to bear something.

(2) And again the Apostle says, 'Take thou thy share of hardness.' It is as though he said: My son, the world is full of hardness, and people all over the earth are bearing burdens and dragging their weary feet towards some grave. Why, then, should you, or any one, complain of your lot and share of the general human trial? 'Take your share.' Probably it is less than your share. Probably you are at ease compared with the mass of human beings with their incalculable troubles—the bodily pains, the diseases, the bereavements, the broken hearts, the poverty, the loneliness, the despair. Is it not a shame for you, for any one, for us, to sulk and complain, and question the very goodness of God because things are not going smoothly, when at this moment, if we could hear it, there is arising from the universal heart, as from a great altar of blood and sacrifice, a wail of pain, a sigh of weariness? 'Take thy share of hardness!' *It is an appeal to our sense of honour.*

¶ Dr John Hutton, speaking at Northfield from this translation of the text—'Take thou thy share of hardness'—related that on one occasion he and his wife were walking in Berwickshire. 'Walking on rising ground we came to the top of a hill, and there at our feet stretched the North Sea, with nothing between us and the North Pole but blue water. I took off my hat to the great sea, and felt like Cortez when on a peak in Darien he saw the Pacific.

Next moment—so suddenly do these things happen—when I was reciting to myself some bit of poetry about the world as God had made it, my eyes fell upon the body of a dead horse on a ploughed field. And do you know, suddenly I hated Nature for her lying countenance!

Fifty yards farther on we saw the ploughman, ploughing with another pair of horses. I entered into conversation with him.

'I see your old mare is dead.'

'Yes,' he said, 'she died this morning.'

'What was the matter?'

'Well,' he said, 'about three or four months ago she was not well, and we called in the

doctor, and he said that her heart was weak. But I had a good master, and he said, "Let her play the rest of her life!" But when we harnessed the other horses, and the mare saw them go out to their work, it fairly broke her heart. She whinnied and sighed and ran about, and became depressed, and went off her food when she saw the other horses working and herself forbidden. Until at last my master said, "You are ploughing a light piece of soil this morning. Take her out and harness her with that big horse! He will do the pulling, and it will please her to think that she is doing something?": not knowing the spirit of his mare! We yoked them up, and she was the proud pony. When we came to that little bit of rising ground there, she was so keen to be at it that she pulled beyond her strength and dropped down dead!'

But there is also a note of triumph in this saying 'take thy share of hardness.' Is it that Paul had it in his mind, that those who would escape the universal toil, and would live outside the universal law of suffering and service, are really cutting themselves off from the elect of God, and missing the true taste of life? They are outside the benediction of the Cross. Do we not feel that to be at ease—to have nothing to do, nothing to endure for the glory of God and for the welfare of the world, is from one point of view a cause for shame, and from another point of view it is to be out of the real secret and rapture of living; for it is to be unnamed among the children of God, and in the Lamb's book of life.

Peace, and be at peace with your thoughts and visions,
These things had to come and you to accept them.
This is your share of the eternal burden,
The perpetual glory. This is but one instant,
But know that another
Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy
When the figure of God's purpose is complete.[1]

[1] T. S. Eliot.

The Christian Facts and the Christian Experience

2 Tim. ii. 8.—'Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel' (R.V.).
Phil. iii. 10.—'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.'

In the first of these two verses St Paul reminds Timothy of the gospel he preached. By gospel here he means the message which he carried all the way from Antioch to Rome. It consisted in the proclamation of certain tremendous facts. 'Remember,' he says, 'Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel.'

In the second verse he is concerned not so much with the objective facts of his gospel as with his own personal experience of them, 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.' Both the objective facts and the inner experience are necessary to a real religion.

1. We do not know whether Timothy was in danger of getting tainted with some of the prevailing and popular heresies or not. Anyhow, Paul bids him always remember the great facts which constituted his gospel and without which he would have had no gospel at all. Paul's gospel was no speculation of his own, it was not the interpretation of his own feelings. It was the announcement of certain objective facts. He preached Jesus Christ—an historic Person. He preached Him as risen from the dead and thereby declared to be the Son of God with power. He preached Him as true man, for he preached a Jesus who was of the seed of David. He preached the fact of the Incarnation, he preached the fact of the Resurrection, and in between he preached the Cross as an atoning sacrifice. The Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection—those three mighty truths constituted Paul's gospel.

And they are the core of the gospel to this day. If we want to be in the line of primitive and Apostolic Christianity we must start from these three great and stupendous facts—the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection. There is a given element in religion, and it is the basal element. Our Christian religion is not the final word of man about God—excelling other religions only because it is a better and a purer word—it is the word of God

to man. And here let no one say that we are back at the old position when the Bible—the infallible word—was made the foundation of faith. The word of God is *in* the Bible—but the final word of God to man is Jesus. In Jesus we see God revealing Himself, unveiling His heart, proclaiming His sacrificial and redeeming grace—proclaiming it in our Lord's birth and death and glorious Resurrection. This is the 'given' element in religion. Jesus is not a gifted man guessing about God, Jesus is God speaking to man, the Word of God to man.

Christianity starts from this 'given' element. It starts with the historic Jesus. That is where Peter's preaching started—with these great facts about Jesus. 'The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew, hanging him upon a tree. Him did God exalt to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.' That is where Philip's preaching started. When he found the eunuch poring over that great 53rd of Isaiah and unable to make sense of it, he took that mighty prophecy as his text and preached unto him Jesus and showed him how it was all fulfilled in the Cross of our Lord. That was the climax of Paul's great sermon at Athens—the Resurrection of Jesus. Wherever they went, these mighty facts formed the substance of their message. It was not fancies or speculations of their own the Apostles preached. They were not philosophers propounding a theory; they were heralds announcing certain stupendous facts—that in Jesus God had come into the world, that on the Cross of Jesus God had borne our sin; and the proof that God was in Jesus was that Jesus on the third day was raised from the dead. 'Remember,' says St Paul, 'Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel.'

We may vary in our interpretation of them, but the *facts* are really the same for every one. And Christianity bases itself upon them. It assumes them—as Euclid assumes his axioms. You cannot have Christianity without them. You may get quite sound moral teaching, you may get interesting speculations about ethical problems, you may get eloquent harangues about social duty without them, but you cannot have Apostolic and Catholic Christianity without them—you cannot have a saving and redeeming gospel without them. As the writer of an article in *The Times* put it, a man may reduce the Cross to a martyrdom and think he is preaching Christianity, but at any rate let him understand quite clearly it is not the Christianity of the New Testament. You cannot whittle away one of the facts without imperilling the whole gospel. The gospel is not in the Sermon on the Mount. It lies in these objective facts, that in Christ God visited our world for our redemption, that He bore our sins in His own body on the Tree, that He rose again on the third day, bringing life and immortality to light. 'Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel.'

2. And now let us go on to say that, while the gospel is in the facts, the facts do not become a saving and regenerating gospel until they are appropriated and made one's very own. This is where the importance of experience comes in. Take the Resurrection for illustration. Paul preached it as a fact, an event. On the morning of the third day, the grave was found empty and Jesus was seen alive. But that mighty fact would remain inoperative unless it was personally received and appropriated. So in the second verse the Apostle prays that he may know Christ and the *power* of His Resurrection. To know the *power* of Christ's Resurrection is to know that there is another life than this, it is to live in the light of that eternal world, it is to die to sin and to rise into newness of life.

A man may know *about* the story of the Resurrection and he may in a fashion believe it without knowing its power. That old and familiar story about Dr Dale at once comes to mind. He was writing an Easter sermon, and when half-way through, the thought of the risen Lord broke in upon him as it had never done before. '"Christ is alive," I said to myself. "Alive"—and then I paused—"alive"—and then I paused again. "Alive! Can that really be true? Living as really as I myself am?" I got up and walked about repeating, "Christ is living! Christ is living!" At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory—yes, Christ is living. It was to me a new discovery. I thought that all along I had believed it, but not until then did I feel sure about it.' It is no wonder that after that Dale began every Sunday morning's worship at Carr's Lane with an Easter hymn. What happened

to him really was this—the fact became an experience. He had believed in a fashion in the Resurrection before, but on that memorable day he knew its power.

In the same way a man may know *about* Christ and, in a sense, believe in Christ and yet not *know Him*. And Christ becomes a Saviour not when we know *about* Him but when we know Him by direct and immediate experience. That was the kind of knowledge Paul craved—to know *Him*. He knew that a mere knowledge of Christ's history was powerless to save. Christ in a man was the hope of glory. So he craved to know Christ's saving grace and power in his own experience. Our Christianity becomes a vital and saving religion when it becomes a matter of experience. Most—if not all—of the people of this land of ours are acquainted with the *facts* of Christ's life. They know about His birth and death and Resurrection. They may hold what are considered to be the orthodox beliefs about these mighty events. But people are not saved by knowing about Christ; they are saved by receiving Him into heart and life.

¶ A vast cloud of witnesses gathers about Him, men and women of every generation, of every race and people, a host too great for man to number, whose transformed lives are built, quite definitely, not merely upon the report of the Resurrection of Jesus, but upon the practice of His living presence. They 'know Him,' and in daily fellowship with Him they experience 'the power of His Resurrection.' One thinks of such a story as that of George Whitefield, the turning point in whose life was due to his discovery that religion was not merely an intellectual attitude to certain doctrines but the positive union of the soul with God. This union he discovered through belief in Christ. Christ was the bond, the living bond, between his soul and God.[1]

And so, while on the one hand a religion divorced from the great facts of the faith is not Christianity at all, even a religion that accepts the facts is not a saving religion until we know the *power* of the facts we profess to believe. It is the Christ personally received and appropriated who saves. Perhaps that is what we need to make our religion vital and vigorous—just to open our hearts to the incoming of Christ. If we will only open the door He will come in to us and sup with us and we shall know Him and His saving grace by direct and personal experience. And then religion becomes real, authentic, triumphant—when, as W. C. Smith puts it, 'the Christ of the story becomes the Christ of the heart.'

[1] A. D. Belden, *The Harmony of Life*, 120.

Help from the Resurrection

2 Tim. ii. 8.—'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.'

This word 'remember' is the keyword of the whole Epistle. It is a call to discipline, to attention; it is a word of command. St Paul reminds Timothy that he is a soldier of Jesus Christ. 'Therefore take thy share of hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' He calls him to attention; bids him pull himself together, and to stand erect like a man.

Let us note that St Paul is not suggesting to Timothy that when he feels depressed and dejected he should pace up and down saying to himself in a mechanical kind of way, 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel,' in the hope that by so doing he would ultimately be made to feel happier. To 'remember' means this: to return to the fact; to work out your philosophy on the basis of the fact. That word 'remember' has very much the same meaning as a like expression used by St Peter in his first Epistle. He, in like manner, was anxious to encourage and to comfort those to whom he was writing, and he says, 'Gird up the loins of your mind.' That carries with it the same idea. Pull yourself together; don't give in; don't let yourself go; don't be carried away by any tornado. Face the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to my gospel. I know, Timothy, says the Apostle, that the Imperial Court has decided to put me to death. I shall not be able to write to you again. There are all sorts of trials and troubles awaiting you; and this is the one thing I would say to you: 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.'

1. What does the Apostle mean here? He makes it very plain that he does not mean some vague, general, philosophical principle. How often has the Resurrection been reduced to

a mere general philosophical principle which proclaims the fact that however wrong things in the world may be, the heart of the universe is sound. But that is not what St Paul meant. One of his great fears in writing to the Church at Corinth was that he should make the Cross of Christ of none effect; that he should fritter it away in some philosophical principle. Neither does the Apostle mean here that the spirit of Jesus still persists in the world; that in spite of the fact that He was crucified and buried, His memory is still sweet, and His teaching is still exerting its beneficent influence among men, and that the thought of Him is a constant source of inspiration to men. No, he does not mean that when he speaks of Christ as having risen from the dead; neither has he in mind some vague spiritual continuation of His personality. He was not using the language of spiritism, or spiritualism.

¶ Sir Oliver Lodge, in *Man and the Universe*, brings much beautiful language into use for the advocacy of this class of opinion. But this is not real resurrection at all. If Christ be only risen in this spiritualized way, there is no more truth in saying that He rose again than in affirming it of any other of 'the dead but sceptred sovrans who still rule our spirits from their urns.' 'From their urns'—just so.

St Paul was referring to the startling and amazing fact which had produced his own conversion. It is as if he said: Remember, that though men crucified Jesus and placed Him in the tomb, yet the third morning He rose from the grave, and manifested Himself not only to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, but to me also on the road to Damascus. Phygelus and Hermogenes and other people were trying to explain away the Resurrection. But, says St Paul to Timothy, whatever they may say, you hold on to the literal and actual fact of the Resurrection.

There are people who have missed the truth of this because they have stumbled at that curious expression 'according to my gospel.' There are two main ways in which they have misinterpreted that phrase. Some have put it like this. If only Paul had not come along with his Jewish legalistic notions and ideas, and put this wonderful scheme of his alongside the simple ethical teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, how much better the world would have been. There are others who say this. 'According to my gospel'—yes, that was St Paul's gospel; but while it may be right for him it may not be right for us. Every man must be able to say 'according to my gospel.' What a travesty this is of the gospel of the New Testament! St Paul's gospel is the gospel of all the other apostles. If you reject St Paul's gospel, then you reject the gospel of the other apostles, and you reject the teaching of the primitive Church, and you reject the doctrine believed by the universal Church throughout the centuries. St Paul knew that this was the gospel that the Risen Lord delivered unto him on the road to Damascus; and it was the gospel which he found in the Scriptures. This is the gospel by which Timothy is to live, and which is to possess and to comfort and encourage him—the gospel that Jesus literally and actually rose from the grave on the morning of the third day.

2. How is that gospel to help Timothy, and also to help us in this our day, surrounded as we are by manifold difficulties and problems? There are certain great doctrinal deductions which we must of necessity draw, and which are to be found in the New Testament.

(1) The first deduction is that the Resurrection, above everything else, is the fact which proves and attests the Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You remember what Paul says when writing to the Church at Rome: 'Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' It was ultimately the Resurrection which proved to the disciples that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God. Here is the corner-stone of the whole Christian position.

(2) Another doctrinal deduction is this, that the Resurrection is the ultimate proof of our acceptance with God. 'Christ died for our sins.' Yes, but what if He had remained in the grave, and had not risen again? We should not have been sure that His sacrifice had satisfied the righteousness of God. But the Resurrection proved that. 'Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' And as we think of Christ risen, and ascended into heaven, we know that we are accepted of God. Christ's going into the presence of God is simply the action of the forerunner; it is an assurance that we who believe in Him shall

also rise and enter into life, to be for ever with Him.

¶ There can be no doubt that the belief in a historical Christ and a historical Resurrection is the only basis on which a living certainty of life beyond the grave can be placed.[1]

(3) The other doctrinal deduction is that the Resurrection does display to us the fact that, after all, Jesus is King. St Paul is reminding Timothy that Christ's glorious Resurrection does prove that Christ is the Messiah. God promised long ago to David that of his seed there should come One who should be King, and whose reign should be without end. Christ has entered into heaven, and He is seated at God's right hand, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

¶ That One who had died a felon's death should nevertheless be Messiah was an idea not only shocking but actually blasphemous to orthodox Jewish minds, and many devout people who had secret hopes about Jesus must have considered that the Cross finished His pretensions. But here in the Resurrection was God's sudden, unexpected attestation of the very highest and most daring hopes that had ever been cherished about Jesus, God's own seal set convincingly to Jesus' Messianic claim, God's final vindication of His Son.[2]

3. These are some of the doctrinal deductions; but there are also practical deductions, and we may believe that it was these practical deductions which were uppermost in the mind of St Paul. He says in effect: Timothy, you are having a difficult time; but you will yet have to face still greater difficulties. The clouds will gather around you, and you will find yourself enshrouded by a thick darkness. But whenever you are conscious of the presence of evil forces, whenever you feel yourself to be almost overwhelmed, just think of my words. 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.' All the forces of evil were gathered around Christ as He hung on the Cross; in a sense they were there seeking to kill Him. Hell did its worst. But in spite of the forces of hell, in spite of death, Christ rose triumphant from the grave. And He has promised that those who suffer for His sake shall also be triumphant. 'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.' The Apostle knew that there would be times in his life when Timothy would be tempted to doubt whether the promises of God were sure, and whether he could rely upon them. At such a time, says St Paul, 'remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead.' It was a great and glorious promise that God gave to David concerning the coming of the Messiah. But there came days of desolation when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem; and when the Chaldeans sacked the Holy City, and carried the people away captive to Babylon. But in spite of all that the Messiah, promised long, did eventually come. The promises of God are sure. You may wonder at times what is happening. But let the great fact of the Resurrection remind you that what God has promised He will certainly fulfil.

But there was something else, and perhaps to us it is the most comforting thing of all. Timothy, says the Apostle, there will be times when you will feel quite certain about the promises of God and the ultimate success of His Kingdom. But you may be feeling weary and forlorn, and although you may know that things are all right in the sight of God, you will doubt yourself; you will wonder whether you are fit to continue in His service, and you will feel like going back. At such a time, says the Apostle, remember that you can turn in prayer to the Lord of glory, seated there at the right hand of God. He is your Advocate, waiting to succour and to help you. And although He is the risen and glorified Lord, the One to whom has been given all might, and dominion, and power, He is still of the seed of David; He is still the One who trod this earth, and He still bears in His hands the imprint of the nails, and He still remembers us, and understands us, and is able to sympathize with us. And He bears with us in our weakness and in our ignorance. 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.'

Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our fellow-sufferer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His Tears, His Agonies, and Cries.

[1] *John Stuart Blackie*, ii. 321.
[2] J. S. Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, 197.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.

With boldness therefore at the Throne
Let us make all our sorrows known;
And ask the aid of heavenly power
To help us in the evil hour.

The Word lives on

2 Tim. ii. 9.—'But the word of God is not bound.'

In this impassioned exclamation we have the Apostle's triumphant conviction that in the gospel was a free, fetterless principle which had a marvellous force of its own, manifested in spite of the fury of persecutors, the infirmities of its advocates, and obstacles of all kinds placed in its way. God's preacher might be in prison but God's Word went free. Whatever might hinder or silence the messenger, nothing could arrest, or even impede the progress of the Word of God.

Let us consider the text in three ways.

1. *It is a student's acknowledgement.*—Saul of Tarsus had been a student in both Hebrew and Greek universities. His supreme study had been the history of his own people. To them God had spoken. They had not always been willing to hear, remember, or obey. They had been guilty of apostasy, idolatry, revolt; they had suffered many things, bondage in Egypt, desert travail, conflict with neighbours, exile and captivity, weary restoration, new bondage under successive empires, one long drawn out persecution designed to sever them from faith in God. Yet still, after all their sad and stormy generations, they had held to the Word of God. The Apostle's own pedigree was an epitome of their suffering and triumph. Of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews he was pure not only in blood but in faith. This was his acknowledgement as a student, based on centuries of the history of his own people, that the Word of God was not bound. And the Word is not bound to-day. Generations hence there will be history students in the universities. They will sit for examinations and they will be asked to state what they know of the nature and effect of the religious persecutions in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Every one will answer according to the fullness of his or her information, but one thing all will acknowledge—that the Word of God was not bound.

¶ 'I am firmly convinced,' writes Martin Niemöller, 'that all attempts to place obstacles in the way of the holy gospel must serve the sole purpose of increasing its impelling force. I should like to say to every one: Be of good cheer. Our Lord God is going forward and despite the apparent defeats of His Church He is confounding His enemies.'

2. *It is a persecutor's admission.*—Paul, when he was still Saul, heard that a new blasphemy had appeared in Israel. Men were preaching that God, having of old time spoken unto the Fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, had in these latter days spoken by His Son; that is, no longer in *a* word but in *the* Word. To Saul this was the latest and most outrageous of all the attacks upon the Word of God as Israel held it. It was a monstrous attempt to bind with the ropes of blasphemy the Word of God. So he joined with the leaders of his race to suppress this new Word about the so-called Son of God.

For a time everything went well. Christ was dead, and buried, though a few fanatics imagined He was still alive. The hounds of orthodoxy were on the track of His disciples. That prominent and dangerous Christian layman, Stephen, had been stoned to death. Flying raids, led by Saul himself, had put most of the Christian leaders in prison. Yet, despite all that, everything was going badly. The Church was scattered, but wherever its members went, converts were multiplied and more and more lips took up the story of Christ, crucified and risen, as the living and final Word of God. At last Saul met Christ Himself. It was a shattering experience. Had not vigilant enemies seen the dead Christ bound with linen and spices and put into a tomb? Yet here He was alive, Divine, challenging, unbound, and free! After that Paul gave up trying to bind the Word of God. He became bound himself, humbly and brokenly enslaved at the feet of Christ, crying 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

3. *It is a Christian's resolve.*—Saul the student knew how much the Word of God in Israel had

owed to those who died for it in faith. Saul the persecutor knew that the anvil on which God smote the fetters from His Word was the iron courage of Christ's men and women. So Paul the Apostle was under no illusion as to the cost of keeping the Word of God free. Men had to co-operate with God and, if need be, suffer with Christ. That is his word to Timothy here, unfolded in the context in several ways.

(1) The Word of God lives on through others to whom we give it. We must never keep it to ourselves. The Word of God, stored only in one man's heart, might perish with him, and it is too vital to the world to be left to the mercy of such an accident. Just as important records are duplicated and triplicated, and stored separately where one chance bomb cannot destroy them all, so must the Word of God be given to others. This is the elementary Christian duty of preachers to hearers, of parents to children, of teachers to scholars, of the man in the pew to the man in the street, of the education authorities to the rising generation. It is elementary Christian strategy. To neglect it is to be bad servants and worse soldiers of Jesus Christ. So Paul says to Timothy, 'The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'

(2) The Word of God lives on through those who are willing to face death for it. There are times when the world is an auditorium, where great preachers hold the crowd with the Word of God. There are other times when the world is an amphitheatre, in which flowing blood speaks better words for God than eloquent tongues. It is such a time in Europe now. The stake is a more effective rostrum than the pulpit, even as Christ's silent word from the Cross has made many more disciples than His Sermon on the Mount. Niemöller, preaching in a Berlin suburb, is less eloquent than Niemöller silent, in a German concentration camp, concerning the fact that there is a Word—a Word of God—which rulers are afraid to have spoken but for which men are not afraid to be broken. Latest to enter the amphitheatre are the Bishops of the Norwegian Church. By such men, by all such men, the Word of God lives on, for daring gets a hearing anywhere.

¶ Amongst the preachers of the gospel whom, in the evil days of Charles II, the State tried to silence was John Bunyan. For twelve years, and those the years of his prime, he languished in Bedford gaol. He might have had liberty at any time by giving a promise not to preach. But that was a promise John Bunyan dare not make. You remember, perhaps, his wife's reply to the judges before whom she had appeared to plead for her husband's pardon. 'Will thy husband leave off preaching?' said Justice Twisden to her. If so, they would send for him. 'My Lord,' answered Elizabeth Bunyan, 'he dares not leave preaching so long as he can speak.' And so this sapient judge, to silence John Bunyan's preaching, resolved to have him kept in prison. He thought that by silencing the preacher he could silence the truth he taught. But in prison John Bunyan wrote his *Grace Abounding* and dreamed his immortal dream of *Pilgrim's Progress to the City Celestial*, and by those two undying books he preached the Word to thousands and tens of thousands whom he could never have reached by his voice.[1]

(3) The Word of God lives on in the consciences of those to whom it is spoken. For that reason Paul bade Timothy never to be afraid, when occasion came, to reprove, exhort, and rebuke. John the Baptist was bound by Herod, but the Word of God was not bound. It remained and rankled in Herod's heart. It always does remain. When the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and pierces a man's soul, that man may strike down God's swordsman but cannot withdraw God's blade. Only the hand of Christ as Saviour can draw out the sword and heal the wound, and that only upon the man's repentance and faith.

I saw one man, armed simply with God's Word,
Enter the souls of many fellow-men,
And pierce them sharply as a two-edged sword,
While conscience echoed back his words again.[2]

The Word of God is not bound and cannot be bound. It has in it the life of Him from whom it comes and shares the eternity of Him to whom it must return. As Peter said, it liveth and abideth for ever. It has been the Word of creation and the Word of revelation; it is the Word of condemnation and the Word of salvation. Some day it shall become the

[1] J. D. Jones. [2] Mrs Norton.

Word of consummation, for Christ the Living Word is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Father, let Thy kingdom come,
Let it come with living power;
Speak at length the final word,
Usher in the triumph hour.

God is always Himself

2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.—'If we disown him, then he shall disown us, if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot be untrue to himself' (Moffatt).

1. THIS is St Paul's conception of the faithfulness of God: that His nature and character constitute for Him, so to speak, a solemn obligation; that He is bound by what He is and can never act out of character, never be untrue to His own blessed nature. We can, we often do, drop below our best selves; act out of harmony with the real plan of our nature. Contradictory impulses and thoughts fight in us, unexpected passions blaze up suddenly in hungry flames, leaving us bewildered and ashamed. No man is always himself; God is always Himself—He cannot be untrue to His own nature.

Which means that if even once we have met Him face to face, then we know what He always is; and can depend upon that absolutely and for ever. And the wonderful thing about Christ is, that as people looked at Him, followed Him, watched Him, burningly it came home to them that this is what God must be like; that, if there be a God at all, then He must have Christ's eyes, Christ's ways, Christ's ever helpful hands, Christ's character; that God too must use His life in the same lavishly generous way, counting no sacrifice excessive, and no cost too vast, if thereby what was lost be found, and broken things are mended. And do not forget, says Scripture, that what God is, He always is. If we have really been at Calvary, and seen it all with our own eyes, and are sure of it, then let us remember that this is not a mood from which He might pass, but His settled mind toward us, a revelation of what His divine existence always is. God's love is a sun that never sets, and never sinks, but is always at its full noonday glory.

If only we could be quite sure of that, if we were always certain of God's Christlikeness, would not a mass of difficulties be as good as over? If we could only take it in that, whenever and wherever God meets us, we are dealing with the heart we see on Calvary; that whatever comes to us, it is He who gave His Son, His best, His all, who sends us this; if, like Festus in Browning, immersed in life's perplexities, we could take our stand on this as a fixed fact, 'God, thou art Love, I build my faith on that,' and whatever life may send us, and however our faith gives, would pull ourselves together, saying: But I did climb Calvary, did see with my own eyes; I 'know in whom I have believed and am persuaded' that He, who loved me there like that, cannot have grown harsh to me now, would we not face whatever may be coming unafraid, meet it with gallantry and calm?

¶ The other day there came to me a letter from China. It was written by the wife of a young missionary doctor. God had blessed them greatly in their labours there, and had given them two dear children to make glad their home. But typhoid came, and the young doctor was taken, and this letter was written two days after his death. 'As you know,' it said, 'these years have been ones of perfect joy, perfect understanding, perfect love, and I praise God with all my heart for His great gift to us of such love.' A little later, it added this: 'I cannot begin to understand—but I know *our* love for our little ones, and that God's love is infinitely greater—I can only trust that love.'[1]

2. Yet it is desperately hard not to fall back at times into the foolish notion that God is like ourselves; sometimes better, sometimes worse, kind yesterday no doubt, but strangely forgetful now, inconsistent and incalculable as we are.

For one thing, the God whom we see on Calvary is a Holy God who hates evil and who will make no compromise with it but will hunt it down relentlessly and chase it from His universe. And that is our hope—that the Power behind things is set on righteousness; that the essential make-up of the world is opposed to evil. That is the settled basis upon which we build our thinking. A great and powerful nation wrongs the world, and we appeal to God with confidence, and live on through dark days undaunted and unafraid, because He is on the throne. Much is amiss in the earth; and, when

[1] James S. Stewart.

nothing happens and reform is slow to come, boldly we lay hands upon immortality, claim all eternity, arguing that if things do not right themselves here, then there must be something more, where evil does go down, and where good does come to its own. God must be holy or the very ground gives beneath our feet.

And yet, although so sure of that in theory, none the less, when it touches ourselves, we are apt instinctively to deny it; to assume then that God is inconsistent and self-contradictory, that He will make exceptions in our favour. We are well aware that there are many things in our character that ought to be put right, yet we are not alarmed, and leave them there; feeling that God will find some way to evade His own solemn words, and let us off. It is the vainest of vain dreams. He cannot: and, in our better moments, do we wish it? In any case there is a dreadful truth in the great fact of Karma that lies, like a shadow, over so much of the East. 'Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny,' as Thackeray put it in words long ago grown trite; and they seed themselves so inevitably. It is not that God changes; always His hands keep seeking; always His voice is calling our name, desperate until He finds us. Only, there is the awful mystery of the human will; that we, puny though we are, can set ourselves against the Almighty, and openly defy Him; and that, so far at least as our dim peering eyes can follow, sometimes it is the rebel soul that has its way! God cannot be false to His own nature; 'if we deny Him He will deny us': we cannot have both sin and Him; one or other it must be.

3. But to end there were no gospel, as Christ's message is, but one of those half-truths which can be, of all things, the most cruelly untrue. Ben Jonson was of opinion that even Shakespeare would have been a greater than he is, if he had not 'forgot that last and greatest art, the art to blot.' And few things in the New Testament are so interesting and illuminating as its corrections and its emendations. 'Now that ye know God,' writes Paul to the Galatians, and then he strokes that out, and substitutes 'or, rather, are known of Him.' So here, did the writer pause, look back, and read what he had quoted, not yet dry, 'if we deny Him, He will deny us,' and did he feel that is true, and yet it may mislead, and so add the glorious parallel fact even more basal, yet even 'if we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot be untrue to Himself?' That is the dominant note of Scripture—the amazing, pertinacious, dogged loyalty of God. We hear it everywhere. 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel!' 'All day long I have stretched out imploring hands to you.' God, says Paul, haunts us like a beggar not to be repulsed; keeps following us, and breaking in on us again, whenever He sees any chance of gaining our attention; pleading with us to be reconciled to Him, who has nothing but love in His heart for us. We sin, and God's answer is love; we heap up more sin, and He gives more love; we make our sin an inexcusable thing, and His answer is Calvary. Though we are faithless, He abideth faithful to His own essential nature, cannot be untrue to Himself.

It is strangely difficult to escape from God. He follows us, haunts us, hems us in, will not be repulsed nor take refusal! Once in the flock of the Good Shepherd, we have at our back an immensity of sleepless skill and patience that, however often we may spill through each inviting gap in every hedge, finds us again. It is slow work, herding sheep, slow tiring work! They are so apt to stray, to follow one another, are so stupid at the best, so easily tired, or flustered into yet another stampede by just nothing at all. Yet it is a poor shepherd who loses even one. And the most comfortable passage in the Bible is that in which Christ tells us that His own good name and honour and obedience to God are bound up in His getting us safe home. 'I came down, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me: and this is the will of him that sent me, that of them that he hath given me, I should lose—not one.'

¶ 'Often and often,' says Samuel Rutherford, 'I have in my folly torn up my copy of God's covenant with me; but, blessed be His name, He keeps the principal in heaven safe; and He stands by it always.'

So rest thee deeply in this blest assurance,
Shining undimmed upon thy pilgrim way,
Though thou art faithless, yet thy God abideth
Faithful for aye.[1]

[1] J. E. Livock.

The Double Seal

2 Tim. ii. 19.—'Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness' (R.V.).

At this particular point in his letter the Apostle Paul is dealing with a certain theological trouble. There were two men in the Church named Hymenaeus and Philetus who said that the Resurrection was past already. Commentators are not quite agreed as to what precisely their heresy was. Some think that they taught that the Second Coming of Christ had already taken place, that the Millennium had come and that death was abolished. Others think—and this is the more probable view—that they taught that the Resurrection had already taken place when the old man died and the new believing man was born—which of course was tantamount to a denial of the redemption of the total personality which is the New Testament doctrine of the future life.

But whatever may have been the precise form their heresy took, they had managed to overthrow the faith of some and had seriously injured the Church. Paul does not minimize the seriousness of the heresy. In holding it, these men had erred concerning the truth, but there was no need because Hymenaeus and Philetus had lapsed into error, on that account to despair of the Church. Paul rallies Timothy with this great word of the text 'Howbeit'—in spite of Hymenaeus and Philetus and their false teaching and the defection they had caused—'nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth.' The Church stood in no danger of overthrow. It was built upon the Eternal Rock and no storm could bring it to the ground. The gates of hell could not prevail against it.

1. *The Unshakeable Church.*—'Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth,' or, as the A.V. puts it, 'the foundation of God standeth sure.' What a tonic, bracing word that is for times such as these in which we live! What a rebuke to the defeatist temper! The foundations of the earth are being shaken and removed in these tremendous days. The very bases of society are being broken up. But there is one thing that stands secure and unshakeable amid the crash and fall of systems and governments and nations and that is the Church of the living God.

The real Church is imperishable. You can no more destroy it than you can destroy the soul. Because God is, and because the soul is, therefore the Church is. And so long as the soul of man cries out for the living God, so long will the Church exist to mediate between the one and the Other. Individual churches, it is true, may decay and pass; denominations may cease to be, our ecclesiasticisms may suffer a sea-change, but the Church composed of those who truly love the Lord, the real Church with its mighty redeeming gospel—that Church can never decay or perish. It is God's creation and no storm can overthrow it. 'The foundation of God standeth sure.'

O, where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, Thy Church is standing yet,
A thousand years the same.
Unshaken as the eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
A house not made with hands.

2. *The First Seal.*—The Apostle, in the second part of the text, proceeds to describe this imperishable Church. He says it has a double 'seal,' and by 'seal' he means here the impression made by the seal. The use of seals was universal in the ancient world. They were usually large enough to contain figures or inscriptions, and the stamp of the seal was like a guarantee of authenticity and genuineness. 'The foundation of God'—that true Church which amid all the commotions and cataclysms stands sure just because it is God's Church—has a double seal. It has a twofold inscription stamped upon it. The first is this: 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' The phrase seems to suggest that the real Church and the churches are not the same thing. Sometimes the real Church is larger than the churches—for outside our churches God has His faithful and loyal servants. And sometimes it is smaller, for in our churches there may be those whom God does not recognize as His own. The real Church, that foundation of God which standeth sure, is made up of those whom God knows to be His. It is at once a searching and a comforting word.

(1) *It is a searching word*, for it sets us in the presence of the Lord and bids us ask ourselves as to what we are before His searching sight. And that is the question we ought to put to our souls: Does God know us for His own? We may be members of a church without belonging to the real Church. Our Lord Himself speaks of certain people who were quite obviously what we should call members of churches—for they called Christ Lord and prophesied by His name. But God did not recognize them as His. 'I never knew you,' is His verdict, 'depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' There are in all our churches men 'having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof'—men who make a profession of faith without giving a real obedience. Such people do not belong to the real Church. This real, imperishable, unshakeable Church consists only of those whom God recognizes as His own.

(2) *It is a comforting word.* Timothy was troubled by the disputes and controversies that divided his church at Ephesus. Possibly Hymenaeus and Philetus and their party had denounced him, repudiated his authority and charged him with not preaching the full Christian truth. Paul reminds Timothy that he need not trouble himself overmuch about what men said about him. They might misapprehend him and even excommunicate him, but it could make no difference to his real standing. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' That thought had been Paul's comfort when his enemies challenged his gospel and denied his apostolic standing. Paul fell back on the truth that it was with the Lord and not with men that the verdict rested. 'He that judgeth me is the Lord.'

That has been the strength and comfort of confessors and martyrs all down the centuries. They have looked beyond the human condemnation to the approving Lord. Persecuted, cast out, martyred, they have sustained themselves with this thought, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' And that is the indestructible Church, the foundation of God that standeth sure—the Church composed of those men whom the all-knowing Lord acknowledges as His own. It is a Church composed of men called and chosen and kept by the Lord Himself.

The sure foundation, not only of the Church but of our own personal hope and joy and faith, is in the fact that the Lord knows them that are His. If God knows us for His own—and He acknowledges as His own all who simply and honestly love Him—then the foundation of our trust standeth sure. We can dismiss all doubts and fears. The basis of assurance is never in ourselves but always in our Lord. Not in the fact that we know Him, but in the fact that He knows us; not in the fact that we have chosen Him, but in the fact that He has chosen us; not in the fact that we love Him, but in the fact that He loves us.

¶ There is a suggestive sequence in our Lord's allegory of The Good Shepherd. 'My sheep hear my voice,' said Jesus, 'and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.' You notice, 'I know them.' What next? 'They shall never perish.' It is the Shepherd's knowledge of His sheep that guarantees their safety.

3. *The Second Seal.*—'Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.' The real Church consists of those people whom God recognizes as His own, who are conscious of His call and favour and saving grace. But all the Lord's people must 'depart from unrighteousness.' That is how they may be recognized. The secret love of the soul must reveal itself in the conduct of the life. And where this outward sign of holy conduct is not to be seen, the inward grace does not exist. For no man really belongs to Christ, who in life and conduct is the servant of self and sin. So that is the second seal, the second characteristic of the real Church, that all who truly belong to the Lord 'depart from unrighteousness.'

Does the Church as we know it bear this seal? Do we 'depart from iniquity'? Do we give a wide berth to all wrong, to all mean, dishonourable and selfish actions? 'Unrighteousness'—injustice, unfairness—do we depart from it? Is not the neglect of the outside masses due in part to this: that, 'naming the name of the Lord' sometimes seems to make so little difference in conduct? If every one who called himself a Christian refused to have part or lot in anything mean or unfair or unjust, if he always and everywhere did the right thing, in scorn of consequence, would the world be indifferent to the Church

and would it think there was nothing in religion?

¶ A young theological student took a book of Edwin Markham's poems to the poet with a request for an autograph. At the same time the student asked, 'Will you write underneath your name some thought which you consider of great importance?' Markham returned the volume with these words under his signature: 'Come, let us live the poetry we sing!'

Form or Force?

2 Tim. iii. 5.—'Though they keep up a form of religion, they will have nothing to do with it as a force' (Moffatt).

When we go back to the early days we find that the characteristic mark of Christianity was power. The gospel was the power of God unto salvation. The disciples' lives had power. There was a quality in them that challenged the world. When people met the Christians they were haunted as by the presence in them, and with them, of Another. Their lives suggested and communicated Jesus Christ. To-day the machinery of religion is more complete than ever. There was never more efficiency in religious organization, more thoughtfulness and order in worship. But are we convicted of having the form but lacking the power?

No one would suggest for a moment that the outward form of religion is not a matter of great importance. Without the 'means of grace'—prayer, Bible reading, Public Worship, the Sacraments—all would find it difficult and most would find it impossible to preserve the inner reality of religion. Many need to be reminded to-day that they cannot expect religion to be real to them if they do not perform the acts which help to make it real. But one of the reasons why the Church has lost grip upon our generation is that people have ceased to believe that religion is a force. And can we doubt that that error has been made more easily possibly because some of us have kept up the form and lost our sense of the power? A merely ceremonial conventional practice of 'religious' acts does not commend itself to the modern mind.

1. Let us remind ourselves, in the first place, that religion certainly is a force. Even those who have abandoned Christianity would readily agree with that statement when it is a question of the bad types of religious enthusiasm. The facts of religious persecution, the awful strength of religious wars, the power of the fanatic—all these black pages in human history bear witness to the fact that perhaps nothing is so strong as religion, even in its perverted forms. Or one may think of the power of heathen religions, not only for good, but also in arousing fear and encouraging oppression and class hatred.

¶ Professor Shotwell of Columbia University, speaking as a historian, says: 'Religion moves, vast and potent, in the world to-day. One must be blind, indeed, not to see the evidences of its power in both the structure and the movement of our modern world.'

It is because of the force of religion that so many are to-day seeking substitutes for Christianity. If things are to get done the doers of them must possess at least some of the qualities of religious faith and devotion. And so perhaps the most alarming fact in an alarming world is that vast numbers of younger men and women are giving to political ideals that faith and consecration which our Lord Jesus Christ claims for Himself.

If the Christian faith is to remain and grow in a world in which this is happening it must be because our faith means more to us, not less, than faith in Nazism, Fascism, or Communism means to these others. That can only be so if we understand and accept to the full the kind of power which the religion of Jesus offers us.

2. Let us note the consequences of keeping up a form of religion and forgetting that it is a force. One inevitable consequence is that in time it entails abandoning even the form. But let us look at what the writer of this Epistle believed would be the ultimate outcome. 'Men will be selfish, fond of money, boastful, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreverent, callous, relentless, scurrilous, dissolute, and savage; they will hate goodness, they will be treacherous, reckless and conceited, preferring pleasure to God.'

When we look around at those whom we know who seem to be living respectable lives with little place in them for religion, does not that appear to be an exaggerated prophecy? And yet does it not describe exactly what did happen in Rome, what is happening in the world

to-day, and what always will happen when men lose touch with God? In other words the consequence of forgetfulness of the force of true religion is gradual moral degeneracy. And it is because moral evils are at the root of all social evils, and because it is through the power of God revealed in Jesus Christ that victory over these evils is possible that we need the power of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ more than we need any other power. As André Philippe has said, 'The gospel cannot create a new society, but it can create the creators of a new society.'

3. But let us not forget the nature of the force of Christ's religion. The power that He employed and bade His followers employ was the power of love. Contrast the Strong Men of modern Europe with the Saviour! They that exercise authority over the Gentiles lord it over them. It was not so, it is not so, with Christ. He claims as much from men, indeed He claims more, than does any dictator. But He claims and does not compel; He pleads and does not coerce. How weak and ineffective His way appears to the modern world! It has never been easy for men to accept the way of the Cross; it is harder to-day when so many do not believe that it is worth accepting.

Picture those early Christians when the mighty power of Rome crushed them like flies! But remember that when the Empire had crumbled, the Church had grown. The despised, ignorant Christians rescued all that was worth preserving in the civilization that had tried to destroy them. But the seed of that Church was the blood of the martyrs.

'The tragedy of Christianity,' writes Dr Fosdick, 'has lain again and again in the persistent ingenious endeavour to make it easy and costless. But that essentially ruins Christianity. The very charter of discipleship is difficult—"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."' As has been said, Jesus promised His disciples three things: that they should be gloriously happy, that they should be in perfect peace, and that they should get into trouble. This world being what it is, and the basic principles of Christ being what they are, and the contrast between the two being quite unmistakable, any genuine adherence to Christ is bound to get us into trouble. To be sure with most of us this does not reach to outward martyrdom, but as the world is drifting now who can tell! To follow Christ may mean for us what it has already meant for many of our brothers and sisters in other countries, that we should be willing to die that the way of love may take another step forward towards its final victory.

¶ Few Christians to-day can escape the question 'What should I do if I had to endure persecution for my faith? Should I stand fast if I were isolated, starved, beaten, and tortured? Would my mind hold out, would my body not shrink? Would faith glow within me? Or should I sink into despair?' In *The Mind of John Gibb*, Miss C. M. Townsend tells the story of a conversation between John Gibb and her father, Meredith Townsend, Editor of the *Spectator*. 'Once when some one at table declared the power to stand torture for a faith had left the world, and asked the editor if he supposed himself capable of it, he replied eagerly that he was a coward, and would deny anything in face of a thumbscrew. After a moment his face changed and he took back his words. "Who am I," he said, "to limit the power of God? I might stand it."'[1]

What is the Bible?

2 Tim. iii. 16.—'Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness' (R.V.).

'Criticism,' wrote Professor Gwatkin, more than thirty years ago, in his book *The Knowledge of God*, 'criticism has demolished alike the Catholic presumption of an infallible Church, and the Protestant assumption of an infallible Book.' There are, of course, many Catholics who believe in the infallible Church, though the intelligence of the world has declared against it. There are also Protestants who believe in an infallible Book but they have to maintain their belief by shutting their eyes to a large number of facts. We may assume to-day that the great majority of thinking people are quite aware that it is impossible to maintain, either from the Bible itself, or from any external authority, that the Book was guaranteed by the Divine Spirit against the possibilities of error. It is impossible to say that it was either

[1] *The Presbyterian Messenger*, August 1939.

written or transmitted to posterity under such guarantees that we are entitled to speak of it as infallible. But many people feel a difficulty and are in need of help because they frankly recognize that the assumption of an infallible Book is not possible, cannot be maintained in view of the facts, and they are tempted to say: 'If there are some things in the Book true and others not, how are we to know what is true, what is the criterion? If there is a human element in the Bible, then who is going to tell which is human and which is Divine?' The difficulty then that we have to meet is just the difficulty of those who see that the Book cannot be an infallible authority, and yet they want to know what it is and how to use it.

1. When we call sixty-six books 'the Word of God' we say something which is open to serious objection, and which leads to countless misunderstandings. God's Word is in the Bible; but many things in the Bible are not God's Word. Jesus Christ is the Word of God. 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.' And it is this Word which speaks softly and intermittently in the Old Testament, more clearly and more gloriously in the New. We see gleams of it in the prophets and the psalms; it blazes out in the Gospels.

¶ It was George Fox who first realized the truth, and spoke about it in his time, that the Bible is not the Word of God but, as he put it, the words of God. There is a famous passage in his *Journal* where he refutes a Puritan minister of the day teaching that the Bible was the Word of God. The minister becomes hot and angry in his attempts to prove it out of the Bible and at last, as George Fox says, 'The Spirit took possession of the Community,' the congregation, and as he explained that Jesus was the Word of God they were convinced, and his opponent was silenced.

2. Is it right to say that God wrote the Bible? No, the writers of the Bible were men, and God did nothing to dehumanize them. The lights and the shadows of their moods, the depression and rapture of their spirits, play over its pages. Its contents came up out of the cavernous depths of the human heart. The light that lights every man that comes into the world came up out of the heart. In the Bible we see how this light struggles with human ignorance and sin, until at last it comes out victorious in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Are we to believe when a Bible writer says, 'Thus saith the Lord,' that he is accurately reporting in every case something which God actually said? No. The Hebrews, like all other men, sometimes misunderstood God. Even the greatest of the apostles does not hesitate to say, 'We see through a glass darkly.' If a man who has seen Jesus of Nazareth near the Damascus gate speaks of seeing through a glass darkly, surely it is not unfair to men who lived a thousand years before Jesus came, to say that they also saw through a glass darkly. How are we to know then whether the Lord said a thing or not? We can tell only by bringing it and reading it in the light of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the image of God, and everything in the Old Testament must square with His teaching and spirit.

¶ When Thomas Aquinas, the great mediæval theologian, once visited St. Bonaventura and asked him from what books he derived his sacred learning, the saint raised his hand and pointed silently to the Crucifix above him.

3. St. Paul does not claim here that the Bible is infallible. He says, 'Every scripture inspired of God is profitable.' What are the functions of inspired scripture according to this famous passage? It is 'profitable,' we are told—what for? For scientific and historical information—to give us infallible guidance when we ask how the world was made and how human life has developed, so as to save us the trouble of researching for ourselves, and even to rebuke us for presumption if we do so and come to different conclusions? Not at all. The 'sacred writings' are able to make us wise *unto salvation*; they are profitable for teaching, for correction, for rebuke, for instruction which is in righteousness; they are to furnish equipment for 'the man of God' for an absolutely practical purpose—the achievement of every kind of good work.

¶ Scripture after all exists for one severely practical purpose, and outside that purpose it has little use or meaning. The Bible is the Bible, because it is able to make us wise unto salvation, even though it leave us ignorant about everything else besides. Here is the kernel and essence of the whole matter, com-

pared with which no minor questions deserve consideration. We can say of this Book, as of no other, that 'in its heart are the highways to Zion.' [1]

4. Is the Bible inspired? It is. How do we know? Because it inspires. These writings are the most inspiring writings in the world. How could they inspire if they were not inspired? It is not necessary to prove their inspiration by picking out isolated texts. Let us come out under the open sky, and unroll history before us, and see the world as one vast plain. Behold the different nations, tribes, and peoples living their busy lives, building cities, carrying on trade, formulating philosophies, worshipping at altars. And there, in the midst of the busy picture, is a Semitic tribe which for some reason has an idea that it is intrusted with a mission. It believes that through it all the nations of the earth are to be blest. In some way it has got the idea that God is righteous, and that man must be like Him, and that character is the one supreme thing of value upon earth. In customs and manners, in institutions and language, this tribe is very much like the tribes by which it is surrounded. There are endless resemblances and similarities, but this tribe, for some reason, holds itself aloof from the other tribes, and pushes its way up against Nature worship, against polytheism, against the countless abominations which drift in upon it from the surrounding countries. Century after century this tribe holds itself aloof, consecrates itself to a set of ideas, clings to the belief that a covenant has been made between it and the Almighty. That is inspiration. And more than that, this tribe has a genius for hoping. It projects upon the clouds of the future an ideal figure. Over the head of every king it sees the head of a better king, and over the head of every prophet it sees the features of a greater prophet. Generation after generation the eyes of its great men discern the face of one who is to overtop Moses and the kings. This must be inspiration. Century after century the men of this tribe have comforted one another by saying: 'Some day, some time, it will be well.' And lo! one morning there is a new Babe in Bethlehem. Is the Bible inspired? Of course it is. The Bible lies at the foundation of the Christian world. A Book must be inspired that inspires nations to live nearer to God.

5. Is the Bible unique? Is it different from all other books that have ever been? It is. Inspiration was not confined, of course, to the Jews. God has access to every heart. But no other people ever received God as the Hebrew people did. There have been isolated mountain peaks in Asia, but see this long mountain range culminating in Jesus of Nazareth. Men may quibble about this text or the other text, but there is no disputing the rise and the moral supremacy of the Hebrew people. This thing was not done in a corner. There has been a mighty historical movement, and out of this historical movement there has come a glorious revelation of the character and purposes of the Almighty. If God has not spoken in this movement, He has never spoken at all. It is only people who do not know the other Bibles of the world who place them on a level with our own. Professor Monier Williams, one of the greatest of Oriental scholars, says, 'Place the sacred writings of non-Christian systems on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side, all by itself, all alone, with a wide gap between.' Sir Walter Scott was right when he said to Lockhart in his dying hour, 'There is but one book, the Bible.'

¶ We are only too apt to forget that it is to this despised race that we owe one priceless treasure, the book of books, the Bible, in which scarce out of infancy we were taught to read, and which remains our chief comfort through life. In it the highest wisdom stands revealed in so noble a form, truth and poetry are blended together to such perfect harmony, the result is a masterpiece whose like no other literature in the world can match.[1]

[1] T. H. Darlow.

The Perpetual Opportunity

2 Tim. iv. 2.—'Be instant in season, out of season.'

When the Apostle urges Timothy to 'be instant *in season, out of season*' he uses a striking and picturesque phrase intended to cover all situations and contingencies of life. To be 'in season' is evidently to be in the midst

[1] Carmen Sylva, *From Memory's Shrine*, 71.

of such circumstances that an opportunity for holy service stares us in the face; no evasion of our duty is possible. On the other hand, to be 'out of season' suggests an occasion or environment where there is no favourable or even apparent opportunity for the exercise of our spiritual gifts. All the same, there *is* an opportunity; for whether 'in season' or 'out of season,' says the Apostle, we have to be instant. In the Christian calling *the opportunity is always with us.*

The wise man said, 'To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.' And that is a doctrine which many a man of the world, many a man of action in politics and commerce, has echoed ever since. You are told to adapt your conduct to circumstances. Choose the right time for action. There are occasions when resolute action is a plain duty; there are others when it would be perilous to your interests. Your policy is to be determined by circumstances. But the Apostle suggests another course of action in the spiritual life. He teaches us that we may carry this spirit of opportunism or diplomacy too far. During the intervals when no 'opportunity' occurs, when we are in suspense, waiting for that tide in the affairs of men which is to be taken at the flood, our usefulness may be repressed when it should be exercised. We are such poor judges of what constitutes an 'opportunity,' that our safety lies in perceiving that every moment is an opportunity for service of some kind.

Timothy, then, has not to be too diplomatic in his ministrations. He is not to regulate his enthusiasm by his surroundings. He is not to divide up his work into intervals of earnestness and inertia. He is neither to be intoxicated by success nor paralysed by failure. He is to do his work with a certain daring or 'dash,' in scorn of consequences; and he is to let his faith triumph over all obstacles, whether in his own emotions or in his outward surroundings.

1. This is a view of the religious life of which we need occasionally to be reminded; for *we are apt to make our service depend too exclusively on our circumstances.* Most of us have been saddened by memories of failure in character, in will, in earnestness, and we trace our failure directly to the influence of our surroundings. It is natural for us to be at our best when we are in the atmosphere of sympathy, when those near us enter into our thoughts and ideals, when there is no discordant element of cynicism or hostility about us. We find that we are good when it is easy to be good, but our standard insensibly lowers when goodness requires a sacrifice. If we are sincere with ourselves, we are little better than those whose religious emotions are stirred by their solitary act of Sunday worship in church, and then for the rest of the week sink into dull quiescence. If religion is to be more than the occasional stir of holy desire and thought, if it is to be the formative fact of conduct and life, we cannot be content with being instant only in season. But, also, when out of season, when the sacred influences are withdrawn and we pass from the mount of vision to the noisy street, we must have ears to hear the call of God, and we must be moved by the potent influence of His holy presence.

¶ The real musician does his best not merely before a responsive audience of music lovers; he is true to his art, to himself, even if his listeners are inartistic and ignorant. A committee once called on Enrico Caruso, the great tenor, to ask him to sing at a concert in aid of charity. The chairman said, 'Of course, Mr Caruso, as this is a charity affair we would not expect much from you. Your name will draw a crowd and you can merely sing some song requiring little effort or skill.' Caruso drew himself up, and replied: 'Gentlemen, Caruso never does less than his best.'

2. There is *a tyranny of moods as well as of circumstances.* In the energy of a revival, in the swing of sudden enthusiasm, the life of a church moves brightly, but it is apt to languish under the ordinary routine of worship and service. *Depression*—that common foe of the soul in modern life—is the mood that so often diminishes our zest for service. Whether our low spirits are the result of physical weakness, or a form of spiritual morbidness, *depression* is the signal not for languor in prayer and service, but rather for renewed activity.

There is also the mood of *weariness* which overtakes us in performing familiar duties. The very forms and phraseology of the religious life pall upon us; the glory of the first passion for God fades into the light of common day. We are disappointed with the seeming fruitless-

ness of our efforts to be good. The sense of our uselessness makes us tired of our task. *To be weary in well-doing*—who does not know that mood? When we find no joy in the sacred realities, the holy exercises, the great truths which filled us once with enthusiasm and buoyancy, then the labours of Christian service lose their interest. The outward task depends upon the inward vision. If the vision is clouded, the task is depreciated. Sometimes in the church as well as in the individual, this is a reaction from overstrained spiritual emotions, following on some spasmodic outburst of religious fervour.

Now the *mood of enthusiasm and the mood of weariness alike test the sincerity of our religion.* We may, indeed, distrust ourselves if we only see the opportunities of holy service when our emotions are quickened by some artificial religious stimulant. And when we weary in well-doing, and see no opportunity left to us for the service of *our fellows*, it will be well for us to ask if we love *God* with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind. We make too little of the will in our analysis of Christian experience. It is a will strengthened by constant communion with God that bears down the temptations arising from our changing and fickle dispositions—a will to do God's will at all costs. There is a self-surrender to Christ which is not the work of a moment, but of a lifetime. Self-surrender is deepened within us as we emerge victoriously from each new struggle with our fickle moods and our baser selves. To be instant in season and out of season is to reject the leading of our temporary emotions, and to be guided by the will of Christ into loyal, true, steadfast service.

3. Again, *we are inclined to place our opportunities in the future.* The future is to many of us the great opportunity for pleasing God. We are too ready to rest on what is going to be. We make our gifts, our self-sacrifice, and much of our service conditional on certain events happening in the future—increase of leisure, an assured position, and even the meditative repose of old age. We catch ourselves constantly in the habit of shelving duties till a more convenient season—though the present moment may be a loud call to action. The future is for many of us the occasion for being instant and the climax of all our endeavours. Hence the idea that man can afford to live without religion till just on the threshold of eternity.

It is against this postponement of energy that the Apostle warns us. We have not to indulge in the habit of selecting opportunities, or marking out part of our uncertain life for what is claimed from us now. To put off into the future the duty of the moment—the decision which makes and re-makes character—is to weaken our power for holy, unselfish service. In the spiritual world the postponement of an opportunity, the evasion of the Divine call, is fatal to all beauty and strength of character; its nemesis is weakness of will, incompetence, and moral paralysis.

> I also will that man become aware
> Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he spends
> So much gain or loss for that next life which on this life depends.[1]

Thus, then, every moment is to be regarded by the Christian as an opportunity for the highest service; and though the moments as they pass demand *different* service, they all demand *some* service. The command to be instant in season and out of season does not denote the ill-regulated or indiscreet zeal that uses religious phraseology on all occasions suitable and unsuitable; but it does mean that even when our lips are closed, there shall be no 'idle silence'; we shall really confess God, and our whole attitude and behaviour shall express our devotion to Him.

The Finished Course

2 Tim. iv. 7.—'I have finished my course.'

The Apostle is an old man now—prematurely old, as many a man is prematurely aged to-day. We see him interned in some cold, damp, subterranean cell in a Roman prison. And in that cell he is writing a letter—a letter of peculiar interest to us; for it is his last letter, and so many of us just now seem to be living in a land of last and treasured letters. Like the whisper of an actor, the words go right through the auditorium, and we feel the weight of

[1] Browning.

every syllable. And the writer himself has a shrewd suspicion that it is the last letter he will ever write: 'the time of my departure,' or unloosing, 'is at hand.' 'I have finished my course.'

1. There are three companions in attendance on a man in life and in death: his body, his mind, and his soul—and St. Paul has a word about each of them. As to his body: it is a very sacred gift, and must not be pampered, but cared for, up to the very end. It is the vehicle of sensation, and the cell is cold and damp, and he can get little or no exercise, and perhaps, however strong the mastery of spirit over matter, he may, like a man with an ague, shiver with cold and appear to tremble before his enemies. So he writes: 'The cloke that I left at Troas bring with thee.'

¶ On the morning of the 30th January, the day appointed for his execution, Charles I. rose early. 'This,' he said to Thomas Herbert, who had remained in attendance on Charles after his sentence, 'this is my second marriage-day. I would be as trim to-day as may be; for before night I hope to be espoused to my blessed Jesus.' Then turning to things of earth—'Let me have,' he said, 'a shirt on more than ordinary, by reason the season is so sharp as probably may make me shake, which some observers may imagine proceeds from fear. I would have no such imputation; I fear not death. Death is not terrible to me; I bless my God I am prepared.' [1]

And now for the mind. The Apostle has many a long, brooding hour to wait before the sword strikes its severing blow; he knows how lonely his imprisonment will be, and he says; 'When thou comest, bring with thee the books, but especially the parchments.' One is inclined to wonder what these books were which formed the slender library of St Paul. Did it include some of the great Greek classics, its great poets or dramatists or philosophers? We know that Paul quotes these poets occasionally, but it would be unsafe to affirm that he was a lover of Greek or Roman literature. But we may be sure what these 'parchments' were. They were Paul's Bible. 'Bring my cloak, bring the books, but above all else do not forget my Hebrew Bible.'

¶ When Paul's great translator, William Tyndale, is lying in his dungeon at Vilvorde, waiting for the stroke that is to emancipate his soul for ever, he reminds his friends that the date of his execution has not yet been fixed and that winter is approaching. 'Bring me,' he writes, 'a warmer cap, something to patch my leggings, a woollen shirt and, above all, my Hebrew Bible.'

Paul has a word now about the soul. He will 'make his soul' as the Irish say. Someone had injured him and tried to hinder his work. 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil.' His preaching had been openly attacked by this powerful opponent, and the latter may have appeared as a hostile witness at his trial. 'The Lord will repay him according to his works.' 'I leave him to God who knows all—and, may be, knowing all, will forgive all.' And then follow a few homely words—affectionate remembrances sent to those friends who will like to be remembered when he has gone: 'Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus'; kind messages from fellow-workers, Pudens and Linus and Claudia; and then, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.'

Does it all seem trivial and unworthy of the last hours of so great a man? At such a moment there is neither great nor small, only the real man. And after all, this is mostly what real men write in their last letters. Read the letter written by Sir Thomas More from his cell in the Tower of London to his favourite daughter, Margaret Roper, 'myne own good daughter' as he calls her: 'Oure Lord blesse you, good daughter, and your good husbande, and your little boye, and all yours, and all my chyldren and all my godde chyldren, and all our frendes . . .'; 'Written with a cole by your tender loving father, who in hys pore prayers forgetteth none of you all, nor your babes nor your nurses,' and so on: 'and thus fare ye hartely well—Thomas More, Knighte.'

2. 'I have finished my course.' Does 'finished' mean ended? Yes, in the sense that this life is over. Yes, in the sense that his earthly career, with all its chances, taken or lost, its opportunities of doing good or harm, of helping or hindering, are gone. But, there is another sense in which the word may mean exactly the opposite. 'Finished' has an outlook as well as a backlook. It means here not

[1] S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, iv. 320.

ended, but completed—a period completed in itself, and now ready for the next stage.

Life is divided into periods, though no one period is independent of the other. It is Dean Stanley who tells us how naturally the life of the Black Prince divides itself into periods of ten years, no one period, of course, being independent of the preceding one. As each course is finished it merges into the next one. So in learning English history we were taught it in periods, such as the Tudor, the Stuart, the Hanoverian period, and as each period is finished it passes into the next. And it is the same with our work as with our history. Finished does not mean ended. It often seems, indeed, sad to look back at the passing of works for which we have toiled and suffered, and to see them no more. Well! they have finished their course. But finished does not mean ended: they have done their work and have passed into some other and resultant work which might not have been possible without them. Many a good work has been spoilt by the worker obstinately dragging it on after the finger of God has written 'finis' upon it, forgetting that finished work is still our work, only it has passed into another period and into other hands—just as the finished work of St Paul passed into the hands and work of an Augustine and Athanasius, a Patrick and a Columba, a Selwyn and a Martyn, and many others.

3. And so we come back to the life itself which is passing in the Roman cell. 'I have finished my course.' And here above all finished does not mean ended. St Paul's word for death is 'departure.' It is perhaps the best of all definitions of death. In the original it means 'an unloosing,' and the figure seems to be taken from lifting the anchor and cutting the cable which have restrained the spirit, like some newly launched ship, from setting sail on its destined voyage. So much at least we may believe of the finished course of many a man and woman and little child who seem to have died before their time. They are setting out on a new voyage. Their course is finished, not ended.

¶ We have yet to emancipate ourselves from certain mistaken notions about the end—the end which is not an end at all but a fresh start. Some of these mistaken notions are embedded in our most familiar hymns. There is that line, for example, in the hymn which begins 'Now the labourer's task is o'er,' which runs like this, 'Father, in Thy gracious keeping, Leave we now Thy servant sleeping,' as if the grave was his bed. And the dead are not asleep at all. They are gloriously awake and alive. They are with Christ. 'This cemetery,' said Dr Rendel Harris, at the funeral of a child, 'is the emptiest place in Birmingham.'[1]

So the old man looks on, as quietly and calmly as he looked back, to the next period in his history. For as his eyes look away from his narrow cell into the future, he catches a glimpse of another vision—of a crown laid up for him among the spiritual Regalia in God's great Jewel House, and in that Crown he reads the meaning of past, present, and future. 'I see it all now,' he seems to say; 'as each period of life has finished its course it has prepared me for the next, and a purpose has run through all. I have been chiselled and clipped and shaped to fit the Crown, though often and often without knowing it.' In some earthly coronation the crown is made to fit the head; but here the process is reversed, and in the heavenly crowning the head is made to fit the crown. Thank God, finished does not mean ended. Finished has a future.

The Faith

2 Tim. iv. 7.—'I have kept the faith.'

It was about the only thing Paul had kept. Other things he had thrown away, or they had been taken from him. He had thrown much away that every Jew in those days prized. He had possessed advantages of birth and social position and training, and not unlikely the advantage of plentiful means. But all these advantages he had thrown away. And then there were other things most men prize that had been denied to Paul. He had no home of his own to be a rest to his heart, no kindred who would own him. For daily bread he had been dependent on the laborious work of his own hands and the occasional kindness of others. Some staunch friends he had kept, but others had deserted him, and even turned against him. Almost the only thing he had

[1] J. D. Jones.

kept was the faith; but, to Paul, that was the one thing most worth keeping.

1. *What did the Apostle mean by the Faith?* Certainly he meant something more than a system of theology. No such system had then been formulated, nor did it take shape until much later—and the profound, creative mind of St Paul furnished most of its materials. He was a mighty thinker for whom the gospel was the last and highest truth of which man has either possession or hope, and his eager, pioneering intellect went in quest of long reaches of truth, bringing back rich treasure. His vision of the love of God in Christ unveiled a whole world of new ideas, which he strained his strength to grasp and realize. Yet his faith was not primarily a philosophy, but a fellowship. It was not loyalty to an order of ideas, but friendship with a Person. 'For me to live is Christ,' he said, telling the secret and centre of his heroic and dedicated life. And all his thinking was the effort of a vivid and vigorous intellect to interpret, expound, and apply the revealing experience of the life of Christ in his heart.

If the faith for which St Paul fought was not a system of dogma can we say that it was loyalty to an institution? It included that doubtless, but much more. No great church existed when he wrote, but only a few unstable groups scattered along his pilgrim way. Their life was precarious, and no one knew what they were going to be. No, he meant a mystical union with Christ, a self-identification with Him in a fellowship of life and death. This unreserved, self-forgetting surrender of himself to the Living Christ, in which the revelation of the love of God, as well as the ideal for man, was a personal relation—that was the faith of St Paul. When he spoke of 'the faith' he meant the covenant of his soul with Christ, the vow he had made to the Eternal God, the pledge of fealty to the heavenly vision, and this he had kept inviolate.

2. *How does faith become the Faith?* Here is the crux of the whole matter in respect of faith, and also the secret of keeping it. Even the noblest truth, if held only as a theory, may be nothing more than a piece of mental furniture. Until a truth takes hold of the affections and the will it does not become real, personal, and fruitful. Long ago Carlyle said that the real religion of a man is not what he believes intellectually, nor what he defends in argument, but what he practically believes, lays to heart, and acts upon. That is his religion; that is the chief fact concerning him in every case.

¶ Allison Parr, in *The Inside of the Cup*, expresses the fact of the matter, as well as the deep need of life, when she says: 'I cannot take a consensus of opinion about God—he must be my God!'

In the *Journal* of Wesley we read how, in his early years, he was brought sharply up to this question: Can you preach to others who have not faith yourself? Sorely distressed, he asked Peter Bohler whether he should leave off preaching or not. Bohler answered: 'By no means.' Whereupon Wesley asked: 'But what can I preach?' Bohler replied in memorable words: 'Preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.' At first that looks like an exhortation to hypocrisy, a process of make-believe. But not so. Wesley had no intellectual difficulty regarding the gospel he was preaching. None at all, apparently. But it had not taken hold of his heart. It was a traditional faith handed down from the past. Very wisely he acted on the advice of Bohler, and at last there came that 'strange warming of the heart' which meant so much to England and to the world, and faith became the faith—even the faith that brought light out of darkness, power out of weakness, and heroic courage out of a life haunted by fear.

Always it is so. Whether this unveiling come suddenly as a storm, or slowly as the dawn, it is the one great human experience, and it takes many forms. Intellectual difficulties may remain, as they must remain while men think as mortals; but, as Newman said, a thousand intellectual perplexities need not make one spiritual doubt. When we take the truth to heart it ceases to be abstract, and becomes intimate, personal, liberating; life loses its loneliness, and there grows up in the heart the sense of a fellowship closer than any human friendship, more tender, more revealing, more satisfying.

> Not what, but Whom, I do believe,
> That, in my darkest hour of need,
> Hath comfort that no mortal creed
> To mortal man may give:—

Not what, but Whom!
For Christ is more than all the creeds,
And His full life of gentle deeds
Shall all the creeds outlive.
Not what I do believe, but Whom!
Who walks beside me in the gloom?
Who shares the burden wearisome?
Who all the dim way doth illume,
And bids me look beyond the tomb
The larger life to live?—
Not what I do believe,
But Whom!
Not what,
But Whom![1]

3. *How can we win the Faith?* During his summer in Europe in 1872, his biographer tells us, Phillips Brooks brooded much over this subject, and his meditations bore fruit in a remarkable sermon. Haunted by the text, 'I have kept the faith,' he jotted down his thoughts as they ripened. He noted, first, that no faith can be kept unless it is obeyed—and he might have added that what is true of keeping our faith is equally true in winning it. Truth acted upon attests itself, not simply to the intellect as a thesis, but to the heart as a living reality. As St Francis was wont to say, and Savonarola after him, 'We know as much as we do,' which led Brooks to note that there is a strange moral element in all the passages of the New Testament where 'the faith' is mentioned. He noted, further, that no faith can be truly kept except by discovering in it relations to life; but he did not note that it is the seeming denial of faith by the facts of life that shakes the souls of men!

Life is one long trial of faith. It begins early, it never stops, and it goes on to the end. Disease seizes a child, works its hideous will, and we lay its thin and wasted form in the grave. Can faith face such a fact and make bereavement a step upward? Suddenly, like a bolt from a clear sky, a man is struck down in his prime, laid upon a bed of pain, his work halted, if not ended, and he shunted like a wrecked car off into obscurity. Can he keep the faith? What though he kept his compact with God in the full tide of his power, can he still keep it in isolation? These are the things that try the faith of men, making the high truth of the gospel hard to win and harder still to hold.

[1] John Oxenham, *Bees in Amber*.

¶ Dr Parker, referring to his wife's death, said: 'In that dark hour I became almost an atheist; my feet had well-nigh slipped.'

There is moral defeat in ourselves or in those we love, so pitiful, so heart-breaking. Injustice, inhumanity, brutality—how they darken the heavens in this world of war! Finally, there is the fact of death. Men are born; they struggle, they fit themselves for usefulness, they put forth all their power for good, and the ascending effort is met and ended by death. Nor wealth, nor intellect, nor service, though it be the longest and the most availing, can save us from that vast, all-devouring grave of humanity into which we must sink in the end. What shall we say to all this? Is there any word of light and hope amid the shadows?

Assuredly! These things do but challenge the human soul to put forth its power; these are the facts that in all ages have evoked the great truths of faith. It is the tragedy of life that begets the faith of brave souls and keeps it alive. The final dialectic in proof of faith is not in argument, but in the tears and blood and triumph of righteous souls who win amidst many tribulations. Keeping the faith has too often meant assent to a system of concepts, holding a set of propositions. Keeping the faith in the great and true sense means loyalty to the high vows of the soul, loyalty to the moral being of God, loyalty to the highest in humanity, loyalty to the heavenly vision. Above all, it means that the realities of religion must be resolved into character and the ideal forces that make character. Nothing else or less can stand the testings of life and time and death.

I challenged and I kept the Faith,
The bleeding path alone I trod;
It darkens. Stand about my wraith,
And harbour me—almighty God![1]

The Crown of Righteousness

2 Tim. iv. 8.—'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'

We see from this passage that St Paul encouraged himself in well-doing and animated himself to effort and endurance in the service

[1] Hilaire Belloc.

of Christ by often thinking of the reward which would be given to him at the end of his course. He had no doubt as to the ultimate outcome of his Christian life. It would not end in dust and darkness, but issue into light ineffable and glory everlasting. His service might be arduous, its conditions often irksome; it might involve him in hardship and privation, in the loss and renunciation of many things which from the temporal standpoint seemed desirable, but in the long run the gain would be infinite.

And as he derived support and inspiration himself from this motive, so he appealed to it in others, urging them to perseverance in well-doing from consideration of the gain to themselves that would be the outcome of such well-doing. The life of goodness is not a risky adventure or a dubious speculation. It is a sound and sure investment, which will yield a magnificent return, a return which will not only wipe out all incidental losses and sacrifices, but endow him who makes it with an infinite and eternal treasure in the heavens. Let men think of this and let the thought of it nerve them to resolution in their Christian course.

1. Now there are those who object to this way of putting things. They say that the goodness which springs from motives of prudence or self-interest is an imperfect and unsatisfactory kind of goodness; and that to ask men to obey Christ and to adopt Christian principles of conduct on these grounds is to debase Christianity and turn it into subtle selfishness. They say that we must be good from the pure love of goodness; that virtue is its own reward; and that if we are hankering after another reward as the result of our good-doing, we not only blur the bloom of our goodness, but destroy its very essence.

¶ R. L. Stevenson, we are told, utterly repudiated the notion of reward for virtue in any form, considering it the enemy of piety. The main reason for his antagonism was that in his opinion morality was far too serious a matter to allow any such consideration to enter. 'The world,' he declared, 'must return some day to the word duty, and be done with the word reward. There are no rewards and plenty duties. And the sooner a man sees that and acts upon it, like a gentleman or a fine old barbarian, the better for himself.'

2. If we go direct to Christ Himself, as His words are reported to us in the Gospel narratives, we shall see that Paul did not misinterpret the mind of the Master. Does Jesus not appeal to this motive of self-interest in man? Does He not treat man as a self or individual, with a life of his own which he is to care for and conserve for his own sake as well as for the sake of others? Surely He does. When He wishes to encourage men in well-doing, He says—Your Father in heaven which seeth in secret will reward you openly. And when He sums up human duty in love to God and man, He by no means thereby rules out self-interest. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' does not mean that a man is to regard his neighbour's welfare but to have no regard for his own. On the contrary it means that he is to have a wise and proper regard for his own welfare and make that the guide and standard of his conduct towards others, doing to others as he would that they should do to him. The truth is that the undiluted altruism which is set up as a refinement or an improvement of Christian morality is a purely futile and fantastic ideal. The whole thing is the outcome of a misunderstanding—the fallacy of supposing that self-love or self-interest means the same thing as selfishness. Selfishness means seeking one's own welfare or interest, real or supposed, at the expense or to the neglect and injury of others. But self-interest, with a prudent regard for one's own welfare, combines a regard for the claims and rights of others. In regard to the highest matter of all, the working out of one's own salvation, the cultivation of one's own mental and spiritual life, the more zealously a man gives himself to that the more surely will he be an influence for grace in the community to which he belongs; the two things, effort for one's own good and for the good of others, are indeed inextricably bound together. He who tries to sunder them will be setting apart what God has joined together.

3. But there is another thing that requires to be remembered, and that is *the nature* of the reward which the Apostle looked for. It may seem as if we debased Christianity, as if we insulted virtue, when we incited men to seek reward of goodness other than that which is contained in goodness itself. But what if the reward sought for be more goodness, and more power to attain and practise goodness?

Was not that the kind of reward which Paul looked for? This surely is what he means by *a crown of righteousness*. How can a good man remain good if he is forbidden to look for such a reward? And who would think of calling a man selfish who seeks for such a reward?

The wages of sin is death; if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure, for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove or to bask in a summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

These were the wages, this was the reward that Paul longed for and counted with certainty on receiving. This is the prize he urges us all to bid for. This is the incorruptible crown that will be given to all who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for honour and immortality.

¶ 'The crown *of righteousness*!' wrote Florence Nightingale to a friend—'that word always strikes me more than anything in the Bible. Strange that not happiness, not rest, not forgiveness, not glory, should have been the thought of that glorious man's mind, when at the eve of the last and greatest of his labours; all desires so swallowed up in the one great craving after *righteousness* that, at the end of all his struggles, it was mightier within him than ever, mightier even than the desire of peace. How can people tell one to dwell within a good conscience, when the chief of all the Apostles so panted after righteousness that he considered it the last best gift, unattainable on earth, to be bestowed in "Heaven"?'[1]

The Tragedy of Renounced Service

2 Tim. iv. 10.—'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.'

This is all that we know for certain about Demas. Previously Paul had twice mentioned him—in his letters to the Colossians and to Philemon. In the former Demas sends greetings to the Church, and in the latter is styled as 'my fellow-labourer.' Beyond this brief mention all that we know of Demas is his forsaking of the Apostle, and inferentially his forsaking also of all that for which the Apostle stood.

1. Demas, we are almost sure, was a native of Colossæ or another of those towns in Asia to which Paul had gone preaching the gospel. As he listened to Paul, the voice of Christ went home to Demas. He came out boldly on the side of Christ and was, it seems, well known in certain of the churches. He must have gone up to Jerusalem with Paul, and afterwards to Rome. It was at Rome he fell. At first Demas kept the faith in Rome, for Paul in his earlier letters from Rome sends greetings from Demas. But later on he gave way. We cannot say how it happened; but we know how it may have happened, for we know how these things do happen.

(1) It may be that Demas was of a light and unsteady nature, one of those who after a short enthusiasm grow weary. Then they begin to suspect themselves and end by being ashamed of their previous earnestness. He was one of those, it may be, emotional and easily aroused, whom our Lord recommended to count the cost before entering in any very public way upon Christian service. There are those who, when they come under the power of God, ought to make sure of their own sincerity in some form of Christian life or service which though it is private will search them and try them. By this means they will soon learn whether they have begun to build upon sand or upon a rock.

(2) But from the fact that it was at Rome that Demas fell away, after having stood firm for a time, it is natural to suppose that it was something in Rome which brought this about. A change in our circumstances always brings with it certain dangers—especially to those who are not yet old and confirmed in habits of religion. Probably none of us is aware how much we owe to the ordinary circumstances of our life for keeping us even as faithful as we are. The friends who know us, those whom we are constantly meeting who are better than ourselves, and those who look to us as being better than they are, the Church with its associations for us and its hope and desire concerning us—these all help us and hold us to our word. It would be easy, comparatively

[1] Sir E. T. Cook, *Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 52.

speaking, for Demas to keep his feet in a place where he was known, where everybody knew what to expect from him and expected that, in a place where he had publicly committed himself to a Name and to a Cause; but in Rome, he had no longer these things to check him and to support him. He had not the old stars to steer by—he had not the old retreats and defences and means of grace for his soul. And so he wandered from his course and made shipwreck of his faith. This need not have happened and would not if Demas had acted upon the sense of danger which we are sure God gave him every hour of his life in Rome until he fell.

¶ Woodrow Wilson, when President of the United States, is credited with the statement that 'the most dangerous thing in the world is to go off where nobody knows you.'

¶ 'When one goes to the coast-wise cities of the Orient, hardly a sadder sight meets the eye than the moral collapse of an occasional young American who had been selected here on grounds of ability and character and sent out to represent his firm. When he found himself in the Orient with the restraints of home removed and the customary re-enforcements of communal respectability and family pride gone, thrown back on no more character than could come from his own interior incentives, alas, he went to pieces.'[1]

(3) There are those who suppose that Demas gave way under the hardships and persecution to which he with the others was exposed in Rome. He had to suffer so much as a Christian that at length in order to escape he denied his Lord. That may be. And yet we dare to say that never once in the history of men has the soul given way under external pressure alone. Difficulties by themselves have never discomfited a true man of God. Hardships by themselves never hide the face of God; they reveal God and wring songs from faithful souls. In the war we have been learning that with modern weapons a place may be made impregnable to a frontal or direct attack. That was always true concerning the citadel of our personality. It can never be overcome by outward assault alone; it yields only when it has been betrayed. The heart's door opens only from within, whether it be God or an enemy who knocks. Nothing can really happen to the soul until it consents; the universal sense of guilt is proof.

We cannot believe that it was the hardships to which he found himself exposed in Rome that separated Demas from his companions and destroyed his loyalty to Christ. Before that could happen, something else must have happened for which Demas alone was responsible. He must have looked and listened when he ought to have looked away and prayed earnestly and consulted Paul. And so he may have been tempted to some sin, and that seemed to cut him off from all the Christian people that he knew and from Christ Himself.

2. The consequences of such desertion of Christ are not difficult to understand. For in this, observation as well as intuition is our teacher, and it is comparatively easy to reconstruct the case, at any rate in its general outline.

(1) Demas, without doubt, stultified his previous testimony, and those who had known him in the days of his first love, and had perhaps marvelled at his show of devotion and enthusiasm, now mocked him. And there is no taunt so bitter as that of those who cry that 'This man began to build and was not able to finish!' Its deterrent effect upon others is part also of the sinister influence of such failure. For, whether rightly or wrongly, men do take their estimate of Christ from what they see of His power and the reproduction of His character in the lives of His people.

(2) Demas outraged conscience also, and forfeited his own self-respect. No one has much pity to waste upon a deserter, whatever be the cause or army from which he goes, but by none is the faithless man more bitterly scorned than by himself. And to none in Rome would the news of Paul's death come as a greater blow than to Demas, for its sting long remained to remind him of his own unworthiness of the Kingdom of God. Such is the harvest which all men must reap who sow such seed as Demas sowed on the day when he forsook the aged standard-bearer of the Cross.

(3) But chief of all the consequences of his withdrawal was the fact that Demas thus destroyed the early promise of his life. As the spring buds are sometimes blighted by a late frost, so the possibilities which always begin to develop when a man comes into touch

[1] H. E. Fosdick.

with Christ were withered and destroyed by his turning again to the world and giving the strength of his heart to its pursuits. What a man lives for entirely determines the character of his life. Demas lived for the world and with the world has passed away. But 'he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

3. How easy it is to imagine how it might all have ended if Demas had returned to Paul, and to Paul's God; for we know the goodness and longsuffering of God—'that the wideness of God's mercy is like the wideness of the sea.' We know how it might all have ended even though everybody had been talking of Demas' mistake, or sin, or crime, or whatever it was.

¶ I have known a woman in the country whose son gave her much sorrow until at last he ran away from home. But every night when all was still, she stood upon the doorstep looking out into the darkness. And when at length she turned wearily and closed the door behind her, she would never lock it, not she. She always left the door upon the latch, promising to herself and to the love of God within her mother's heart, that her son would try the door that night, that he would steal in and that he would see things ready for him, and that in the morning when they met, she would speak no word of reproach.[1]

The Recovery of Character

2 Tim. iv. 11.—'Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering' (R.V.).

'USEFUL to me for ministering'—that is a striking commendation and one which any one of us would be proud to have earned, but it is an even more striking fact that it should have been said *of* St Mark *by* St Paul. Recall the circumstances under which they had parted on the last occasion on which they are mentioned together in the Acts of the Apostles. Mark had been the minister taken by Barnabas and Paul to help them on their first missionary journey, but when that journey was extended beyond its first scope and involved a perilous divergence into the mountainous country of Asia Minor, 'John Mark departing from them returned to Jerusalem.' When Barnabas proposed to take him again on their second missionary journey, Paul indignantly refused. The very language of St Luke in the Acts seems to re-echo the indignant tones of the Apostle—'But Paul thought fit, when you had a man who had deserted them and departed from Pamphylia, and who refused to go with them to their great task, certainly not to take that man with them as their companion.'

Now place in contrast with these statements the situation implied in the text: St Paul is in prison at Rome, in danger of death; he is writing to his favourite son Timothy to bid him come and help him in his last hour, and he adds 'Go out of your way and stop to pick up Mark and bring him with yourself, for he has already proved himself most useful as a *diakonos*; if I want to send a word of comfort, a message of hope to those who are meeting for worship in the catacombs, he knows his way about the city already, and no cowardice will daunt him now; if I want to dictate a letter or to have some one to read to me the books and the parchments which you are bringing with you, he can do it; if I want to strengthen myself with the memory of my Lord's Passion and Resurrection, he has learnt the story by heart; he has been my fellow-worker in the past and he will serve me now.'

Mark, then, stands before us as a type of the recovery of character, of the way in which one who has lost his self-respect may recover it.

1. Let us note first Mark's own action. His position was a *very* difficult one. It is difficult enough to recover a true self-respect, when a man is only wounded in his own conscience, when only he himself witnesses against himself of some act of cowardice, or theft, or underhandness, which is not known to others: such an one goes about like a wounded man with a bullet inside him, not knowing where it may work out or what mischief it may work within; there is a loss of perfect straightforwardness, a weakened power to help others; his self-consciousness weakens his powers of sympathy and of service.

But Mark's position was worse than that: his cowardice had been branded by St Paul and made known to the whole Church of Antioch; St Paul had written 'unworthy' across his name; he was to go down to all ages as the man who had failed at a great crisis. What a

[1] John A. Hutton.

crushing position to have to face! how great the temptation to despair and apostatize from this new hard religion! But Mark did not despair, did not apostatize; he boldly faced his position. It was not his now to play the part which would have brought him most before the eyes of the world and to be the companion of the great missionary, so he would accept the humbler rôle; he would go back to his old home of Cyprus, he would stay with his relation Barnabas, and he would do such work as was possible there. Thence later on we find him advanced to higher work; he becomes the follower, the interpreter, the favourite pupil, 'the son' of his mother's friend Peter; he follows him to Rome; he makes notes of his preaching; he interprets it to his Latin hearers; he prepares the gospel, and while he was there the reconciliation came with Paul.

¶ I like to think that when Peter felt that the time had come to put on permanent record the holy memories of earlier Galilean days, he employed Mark to pen the precious pamphlet for him. Peter and Mark understood each other. And as they worked together on that second 'gospel,' they had many a talk of the way in which they had each played the coward's part, and had each been greatly forgiven and graciously restored.[1]

2. Let us note also the conduct of others towards him. We are often inclined to think that Paul was overhasty, and that events showed him to have been wrong, but that is not necessarily so. The sharp, severe judgment may have been quite deserved at the time; it may have been the very means of stirring Mark to higher effort. Paul was bound to take only people whom he could trust; it was one of those emergencies in which previous ties and blood relationships have to be thrown aside, and only the best man for the work considered. But whether Paul was right or wrong at the time, it is certainly to his credit that he was willing to revise his judgment, when Mark had by other work shown himself worthy of trust; and it is an interesting fact that the first sign of a change of mind towards Mark is found in the letters of the Roman imprisonment. At that moment Paul had watched the conversion of the runaway servant Onesimus; he had seen one who had been unprofitable in time past to his master become at last profitable to his master as well as to the Apostle. Is it too fanciful a conjecture that his mind may have gone back to one who had been unprofitable to himself, and that he determined to work with Mark once more and, so working, found him, too, profitable for service?

Certainly we may feel sure that Barnabas, even if wrong in wishing to take Mark in the harder task, was right in still trusting him in the lighter task of the home work at Cyprus. Barnabas, that son of consolation, that stimulating, inspiring friend, who had been ready to see the genius of Paul and bring him forward for his life's work, Barnabas who kept himself in the background before the growing ascendancy of St Paul—he could not cast off his relation; he had the eyes to see the gifts for service that still lay in him, the stimulating power to draw out those gifts into stronger vitality.

¶ 'And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.' If, as the shores of Asia lessened upon his sight, the spirit of prophecy had entered into the heart of the weak disciple who had turned back when his hand was on the plough, and who had been judged, by the chiefest of Christ's captains, unworthy thenceforward to go forth with him to the work, how wonderful would he have thought it, that by the lion symbol in future ages he was to be represented among men![1]

3. Mark was no apostle or evangelist. His business was much humbler than these had to do, being simply to attend to Paul's comfort, and to look after the thousand and one trifles which some one had to be burdened with, if the Apostle was to do his great work. And he kept to his rôle, never wishing that the Apostle would send *him* to Crete to ordain elders as he did Titus, or bid him stay behind at Ephesus to deal with teachers of false doctrine, as he did Timothy. He did this entirely 'secular' work as Paul's private attendant, amanuensis, factotum, with no hankering after more conspicuous service. All sorts of work which contribute to one end are really of one sort. When he had not Mark to look after him, the great Apostle left cloaks behind him here and books and parchments there, and sorely needed some one to keep things together. So Mark helped

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Other Side of the Hill*, 263.

[1] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, II. iv. 1.

to diffuse the gospel as much as if he had been its preacher.

But Mark ended as the writer of a Gospel, and so became an evangelist in the noblest sense. He gave the world a Life of Jesus, the first Gospel to be written. We can be sure of this, that multitudes of people in those old, far-off days, who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, met Him in the pages of Mark's book, and entered—under the evangelist's guidance—upon the highroad leading to salvation. And still to-day, after all these years, Mark is introducing men and women of every race and religion to Jesus, and setting them face to face with the redeeming Son of God.

So Mark proved a vessel 'meet for the Master's use.' And that not only for what he wrote, but for what he was, for the lesson of hope of recovery which he has given after times of failure, of cowardice and of sin.

As men from men
Do, in the constitution of their souls,
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;
And as we fall by various ways, and sink
One deeper than another, self-condemned
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;
So manifold and various are the ways
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps
Of all infirmity, and tending all
To the same point, attainable by all—
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.[1]

The All-round Christian Life

2 Tim. iv. 11–13.— . . . 'Take Mark, and bring him with thee. . . . The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.'

Hardly anything is more impressive or more convincing to the student of the Bible, that is to say, to all Christian people, than its sheer naturalness. Its appeal is so evident to ordinary people. Its intention is obviously to do something quite superhuman for them by directing them to God. But let it be always borne in mind at the same time that it is not out to make them inhuman, or abnormal, or in any way odd. Certainly not that. Its aim is beyond question to make saints, but never to make eccentrics. It identifies no peculiarities, no oddities, with piety. On the contrary, there is perfect balance in its declarations, just as there is in the ideal character at the creation of which it aims, and as also there is in its selection of the human examples it holds up for our emulation. It is all so essentially sane. Indeed, its gospel, the gospel of the Living Christ, is the only certain safeguard against that freakishness which is positively deadly, the life that is devoted to and dominated by the spirit of the world, which orders itself as though it were its own centre.

All of which leads to the consideration of the all-round Christian life, in the hope that we may endeavour to make our personal witness to Jesus Christ increasingly worthier, more convincing, and hence of larger value to Him and to His cause. For, whether we bear it in mind or not, the fact is that He is judged by what people see of Him in the lives of those who bear His name.

Paul is in the Mamertine prison, an old man whose days are numbered. The discomforts of his imprisonment are intensely real. He is lonely, and longs to feel around him the warmth of friendship. So he says to Timothy, 'Do thy diligence to come to me: bring Mark with thee.' He is suffering from the severe cold, and is most likely ill-clad. So he begs him to bring 'the cloke I left at Troas.' He is conscious, too, that, shut away from the free intercourse with his fellows to which he is accustomed, his mind needs refurbishing and refreshing. So he requests, 'Bring my books also.' Above all else, he longs to know more of his Lord and of His unsearchable greatness. So he adds, 'especially the parchments'—doubtless bits from the prophetic writings and the Psalms, possibly also some of the letters of Luke, Peter, and John.

Let us look at the significant suggestion which these personal requests of the Apostle make, that the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual combine to make up the 'all-round Christian life.'

1. Thinking of them in that order, it is full of interest that Paul makes no apology whatever for bringing his concern for the welfare of his body into a letter the subject of which is Jesus Christ and His service.

It is probable that professed Christians

[1] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, iv. 1106.

to-day do not require to be reminded that it is part of their Christian duty not to neglect their bodies, so much as they need to be warned that overcare of the body is an actual infidelity. For in too many instances it occupies so much of their thought, engages so much of their attention, and actually demands the outlay of so much of their resources, that many of them have little interest left for aught else. Keep fit by all means. An unfit Christian is a contradiction in terms which reflects upon His name. But let us be quite clear as to what it is we are keeping fit for. And in speaking thus of the body we speak of the entire material area of life of which it is the centre. For if our bodies, their appetites and claims, their energies and selfishnesses, are not made sacred they will most certainly and rapidly secularize life through and through. Let the cloak, and by that we mean all that Paul's cloak stands for in our life, all that corresponds to it, be entirely at our service and Christ's.

2. Paul's request that his books should be brought to him suggests that in the all-round Christian life the mind has its own important part to play.

Paul is himself an author, an author indeed whose works will live on when those of most other writers are long forgotten. Yet he wanted books! He enjoyed direct intercourse with Christ in a measure beyond that to which most men have ever attained. Yet he wanted books! He knew himself to be in-dwelt by the Spirit of God, and under His power had been preaching the gospel for thirty years. Yet he wanted books! The confidence of inspiration did not render study and mental effort unnecessary to him. And it is quite clear that the books he wanted were by no means all 'Christian' books nor even 'religious' books. There is abundant evidence that Paul kept himself abreast of the contemporary thought of his age. He had no intention at any time of letting Christ's cause down by stupid mental gaucherie.

¶ Dr Fosdick writes of reading: 'So many of the turning-points in man's spiritual history have been caused by it, as with Saint Augustine hearing the voice in the garden, "Take up and read," or, as with Luther rising up from the study of the Epistle to the Galatians to shake Europe with his proclamation of the gospel's freedom! Many a perplexing question about Paul we do not know the answer to, but this we know, that he was a great reader. . . . To-day we read to keep up with our professional or business specialities. But a man who uses books in this way only, as Pharaoh used slaves to build ever higher the pyramid of his practical success, does not know what real reading means. Or we read to keep up with the swiftly moving times. Or, again, we read because other people read, and because we are expected to read the books they are talking of. Of all social coercions nothing is much more compulsive than the exclamation, "What! Have you not read So-and-So?" I celebrate to-day another and higher kind of experience, the spiritual friendship of great books intently read, deeply pondered, one of the abiding experiences of life.'

Books! Books! Books!
And we thank Thee, God,
For the light in them;
For the might in them;
For the urge in them;
And the surge in them;
For the souls they wake
And the paths they break;
For the goings in them
And the songs in them;
For the throngs of folks they bring to us,
And the songs of hope they sing to us.[1]

3. There is something intensely pathetic in Paul's request that Timothy will do his diligence to come quickly to him and will bring Mark also. In his loneliness he longs for friendly intercourse with men of kindred mind.

The suggestion in this entreaty is that there is a social expression of the all-round Christian life which we should set ourselves to cultivate. For in regard to it many are deficient. Their contacts with others are not those of friendship. They only want friends to fill some blank in their own lives and their own resources. But the essence of true friendship is mutuality and unreserve. What would not a revival of the spirit of friendliness bring to the world to-day? More than half the troubles in the life both of men and of nations are there because the springs of friendship have been poisoned at their source. Nothing but a revival of mutual

[1] Walter Pater.

trust and goodwill will save society from still further disintegration and decay. And who should minister to the diffusion of unaffected friendliness more readily and certainly than we of the Christian Church?

2. ¶ A story is told which reflects the kindliness of Abraham Lincoln. A gentleman called at the White House to see the President shortly after his installation, and, learning from an official that Mr Lincoln was not at home, was about to leave when he encountered in the corridor the President's young son. From him he learned that there was a likelihood of meeting his father at the railway station. Mr Lincoln had gone there to welcome a friend. 'But I am afraid I don't know the President even by sight,' said he. In reply to which the boy rejoined, 'If you go to the railway station and look out for a tall, homely man who is helping somebody else you will know that he is my father!'

4. More than his cloak, or his books, or even his friends, Paul wants 'the parchments.' With all his rich experience of Christ and His service he cannot do without the Word written.

No Christian life can be all-round, no Christian life can be anything but empty profession, in which the Word of God is not read, and pondered and laid to heart, and prayed over, and applied. We recall that not only Paul but Jesus Himself also fed His soul upon it, stored His mind with it, resorted to it in all the crises of His life, and in ordinary times, too, found in it meat to eat that the world knew not of. And if it was indispensable to the Redeemer, it surely is likewise indispensable to the redeemed.

¶ In a letter to his son in India Principal Rainy wrote: 'If you have only three minutes a day to give to Bible reading, spend one minute in reading and two in thinking over what you have read in God's presence.'

Let us guard the physical! Look well to the mental! Do not come short in the social! Above all be vigilant of the spiritual! Take time for the cultivation of the all-round Christian life! And especially for 'the parchments!' For all else depends upon our attitude toward them. Christian life fails, fails in any and in all of these respects, unless the Holy Spirit fills it.

Titus

Tit. i. 4.—'Titus, my true child after a common faith' (R.V.).

'If any inquire about Titus,' writes Paul to Corinth, and the phrase is prophetic. There is no doubt that Titus played a very important part in the days when the foundations of the Christian Church were being laid. Yet Sir W. M. Ramsay calls him, 'the most enigmatic figure in early Christian history.' We hear of him only through the letters of Paul to the Corinthians, the Galatians, and Timothy, and, through the letter addressed by the Apostle to Titus himself. His name is not even mentioned in Acts. His birthplace is unknown, but he was a Gentile, and he was living at Antioch when the controversy arose about the circumcision of the Gentiles. He was brought to Christ by St Paul, who calls him 'my true child after a common faith.' He may have been among the fruits of St Paul's first great ministry in Antioch. The first mention of him is in Galatians where St Paul says, 'I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me.' This journey was undertaken in order to settle the great question of making the Jewish law binding upon the Gentiles.

The Judaistic party within the Church wished to have Titus circumcised; but the Apostle and those representing Gentile Christianity strenuously resisted, and the decision of the Church was in their favour. The case of Titus seems thus to have been the test case in this controversy. From this time we may suppose that Titus continued with St Paul as one of his missionary companions and assistants.

1. The chief services rendered by Titus were in connexion with the Church at Corinth, and, at a later period, with the churches in the island of Crete. The Apostle had spent nearly two years in Corinth, preaching the gospel and organizing the Christian Church whose members were made up mainly of Jews, Greeks, and Romans. The work had been pre-eminently successful, and Paul looked upon the Church there as the crown and glory of his missionary labours. But news came from Corinth which seriously disturbed him. The spirit of faction had crept in; more than that, a grave moral scandal was being tolerated, and irregularities

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were showing themselves in the observance of the Lord's Supper. The position needed strong and tactful handling and the sternly-worded First Epistle was written and sent to Corinth. Timothy was sent to report on the manner of its reception, but his mission met with no success. So Paul turned to Titus, and Titus went to Corinth. Titus arrived at Corinth, ostensibly to organize the general collection which was being made throughout the Gentile churches, but with the firm resolve also to endeavour to bring order out of chaos. One has only to read the seventh and eighth chapters of Second Corinthians to learn the greatness of the service rendered by Titus in Corinth. By his energy and tact and devotion—by firm and judicious handling of the situation—Titus piloted the Corinthian Church through a very stormy sea into the harbour. 'I was not put to shame,' writes the Apostle, . . . 'our glorying which I made before Titus was found to be truth. God comforted us by the coming of Titus; . . . while he told us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced yet more.'

¶ Titus comes in many ways. James Smetham closes a letter with thanks to a friend for writing to him when he happened to be depressed. 'Glad to get your friendly letter. It was like the coming of Titus. I think Providence in these days often sends Titus by post.'

Side by side with that mission of Titus to Corinth let us set his mission to Crete, of which we read in this Epistle. We are now in the period between Paul's first and second imprisonments, of which we know nothing apart from what is told in the Pastoral Epistles. After his release evidently Titus rejoined him, and together the Apostle and his lieutenant went to Crete. There they laboured together for a time, but other calls claimed Paul, so he left Titus to carry on the work alone. And the special task Paul entrusted to him was that of appointing elders in every city, and, as we should say, organizing the Christian Church. Paul by his preaching had made believers; it was left to Titus to gather them into churches. Paul did not mean Titus to remain in Crete long; he hoped to spend the winter with him in Nicopolis. The probability is that this programme was carried out. The last glimpse we get of Titus is in the second letter to Timothy, where Paul speaks of him as being on a mission to Dalmatia.

2. Now what idea of Titus do we get from these references to his activities? (1) We get, first of all, the impression that *he was a wise and strong man*. We put the two adjectives together, because the one without the other does not carry a man very far, and certainly would never have enabled Titus to do the work he did. He was *strong*. He was not to be wheedled or bullied. Nothing could make Titus budge from the line of right. And with all his strength he was *wise*. 'Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' was our Lord's counsel to His disciples when He first sent them out to preach and teach 'on their own.' Titus was a master of that harmless wisdom. He had tact in dealing with men. The result was, he was magnificent at settling church difficulties. He was Paul's trusted delegate to all troublesome churches. He was much more a man of affairs than Timothy was. He settled many a quarrel, allayed many a trouble, averted many a split. He was the conciliator and peacemaker of the Early Church.

¶ There is a fine passage in one of Kipling's best stories, describing the toil and anxiety of bridge-building, and the honour due to the man who brings this noble type of public work to success. 'There stood his bridge before him in the sunlight, permanent, to endure when all memory of the builder had perished.'

(2) The second impression we get of him is that *he was a born organizer*. Perhaps he wasn't a great preacher. We have not a single hint anywhere that enables us to form any sort of judgment on that point. But he was a great man at consolidating the preacher's work. A great preacher can always gather a congregation, but unless either he or someone else can organize that congregation and weld it into a church it will be a mere rope of sand held together by the preacher's personality, and when the preacher goes the congregation will vanish too. To make work effective it must be organized, and that was Titus' department. Paul did the preaching and gathered the converts, and then Titus made Paul's work permanent by organizing the converts into churches.

Titus, in a sense, was the first of the great ecclesiastics. The ecclesiastic does not share

in the popularity of the preacher, he is not nearly so much in the limelight, his work often looks secular, but the man who looks after the Church's affairs, who organizes its resources, who sees to the support of the ministry, and sees to it also that there is a ministry to support —this man places us all under an immeasurable debt. The organized Church is the instrument of the Kingdom. Without it the preaching of the Word would be ineffective. The man who organizes the Church and makes it a coherent, stable society is therefore to be held in honour of us all. And of such organizers, ecclesiastical statesmen, Titus was the first.

Titus was the man the Apostle chose to organize the collection in Corinth. Organizing a collection is not the most desirable thing in the world, but Titus accepted the commission without demur. He went not simply because the Apostle wished; he himself was keenly interested in the collection. 'Being himself very earnest,' says the Apostle, 'he went forth unto you of his own accord.' The appeal of the poor church touched Titus' heart, and he flung himself into the work of the collection with earnest zeal.

There have been Church Aid collections since Titus' day. Indeed, the poor church, the needy church, is always with us, and successors to Titus have not been wanting. When some modern Titus pleads, let us show by our liberality that we remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, and pay back a part of that measureless debt we owe the Lord by ministering to His poor.

The Selective Power of Personality

Tit. i. 15.—'Unto the pure all things are pure.'

How often these words of the text have been misapplied! The commonest misuse of them is this. Something offensive has been spoken, something coarse or allusively indecent, and one of the company with a hot heart has protested against the evil utterance; whereon immediately, sometimes with a smile, oftener with the suspicion of a sneer, he is told that unto the pure all things are pure. The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose, and such a citation is the devil's handiwork. The text does *not* mean that good and evil have their being in our thoughts about them. There are things that are everywhere and always right, and there are things that are everywhere and always wrong, and there is little hope for any man who has learned to tamper with these fixities. In a bare and literal sense it is not true that unto the pure all things are pure. Unto the pure, till the last trumpet sounds, there will be words and actions that are horrible.

¶ There is a beautiful story told of the saintly Wesleyan minister, Percy Ainsworth, who died very young, but left memories that are fragrant to this day. His young brother was going home in Manchester very late one night when, to his astonishment, he saw Percy Ainsworth, who always went to bed early, standing before a building in a dark and squalid street, sponging the wall. He stopped amazed, and cried: 'Percy, what on earth are you up to?' And Ainsworth explained that earlier in the evening, going home from a service, he had seen written on this wall some foul and filthy words. He went home and tried to forget them. He attempted to read a book, he went to bed and sought sleep, but all in vain. Those vile words were there—people were reading them as they passed by, even the minds of women and boys would be poisoned by them. So at last he got up, found a sponge and walked through the city to the old building in the grimy street and washed out the unclean words.[1]

What then is the true meaning of the text? Well, it is something of this kind. It is the inspired if proverbial expression of the selective power of personality. Everything with which we come in contact carries a large diversity of meaning. There is nothing we meet with in our common walk but is capable of different interpretations. And how we shall interpret all that wealth, and what we shall see in it as it steals by, all that is really fixed by what we are. By all the influences that played on us in childhood, and all the activities of our maturer years, by every battle we have quietly fought, and every burden we have bravely borne, by the unhindered trend of leisure thought, by temptation, by friendship, by religion—whether for weal or woe we have forged out our personality. It is the only thing that we possess really, yet it is something

[1] F. A. Atkins, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*, 95.

more than a possession. It is by that, and that alone, that we interpret everything around us. By *that* we see—by *that* we read—by *that* we interpret God and man and everything. That is the key which unlocks every door opening on to the riches of the universe.

1. Let us carry that thought into one or two spheres, and first let us think of *Nature*. One of the noblest odes in literature is the ode of Coleridge written at sunrise at Chamounix. The poet is gazing upwards at the Alps, and he hears a mighty song of praise to God. The torrent praises Him; the eagle praises Him; the forest of pine and the snowy summit praise Him. There is no discord in that mighty chorus —'earth with her thousand voices praises God.' But now there comes reeling on to that same scene some poor drunkard with his sodden brain. And the same torrents are sounding in his ears, and the same peaks are white against the heaven. But for him, ruined by his vice, neither in cataract nor snow nor forest is there heard one syllable of heaven. Both look on the same mystic dawn; both hear the rush and swirl of the one river that hurries from the everlasting snow. And to one it is the echo of that song which was sung in the high heaven when Christ was born; to the other it is the echo of despair. In other words, faced by this wondrous world, we always get just what we bring. We see its power and glory *through* the eye, but never do we see them *with* the eye. We see them with all that we have made ourselves—with every virtue that has been wrestled for, and every passion that has been brought to heel. That is why places which speak to one of peace, speak to another of sinful opportunity. That is why sky and sea to one are paradise, and to another are but air and water. That is why, in apostolic thought, sublimely careless of misinterpretation, unto the pure all things are pure.

¶ When visiting Forest, the most remote of the parishes in Durham, Bishop Moule watched from a height a glorious sunset, 'the light of parting day gleaming on the top of the mountains as it gradually crept along their slopes. The colouring was indescribably beautiful, and, raising his hat, he was heard to murmur: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in".'

2. The same thought also applies to *language*. Through all the range of it, language is coloured by the abiding mystery of what we are. It might well seem to the casual observer that there were few things more fixed and definite than words. The fact that there are such books as dictionaries argues for the stability of words. And yet those words, which we are always using, and which seem fixed and rigid as the hills—there is scarce one of them but is affected subtly by this tremendous fact of personality. In every term we use there is some shade of meaning which has never quite been caught by other men. There is some suggestion that is all our own, whether it be a high suggestion or an evil one. And the point is that all that verbal colouring, which gives to our words an individuality, springs from the kind of life we have experienced, and the character we have been forging in the dark.

It is in that sense we understand our Lord when He says that by our words we shall be judged. If we are but drawing on a common stock, there can be no principle of judgment in our minds. But if on the common language that we use we cast the shadow of our deepest self, then in our words, when all the books are opened, there will be more of revelation than we dream. It is a truth of widest application that the style is the man. To put it otherwise, all mastery of language is at the heart of it a moral business. It is not merely an artistic victory; it is a moral and spiritual victory. He who has conquered words and made them serve him, so that they throng to him in power and beauty, has conquered things more powerful than words in the secret battle-places of the soul. Behind the glory of the words of Ruskin lies the moral enthusiasm of Ruskin. And who does not feel, in reading Stevenson, the presence of these very qualities which made that life of his, with all its suffering, such a quietly heroic thing. Unto the pure all things are pure. It is the inward self that shapes the instrument. It casts its shadow whether for weal or woe on the universal heritage of speech.

Now if that be largely true of all speech, it is especially true of the great words we use. It is true, for instance, in a very solemn way of the greatest of all words, *God*. It is coloured for us by the hand of memory. It comes to us impoverished and enriched by all that home has been, and all that church has been. The light

of all our friendships is upon it, and all the love that has met us as we journeyed, and all the decisions we have taken, and all the sorry refusals we have made. That is why *God* to one means everything; that is why to another it means nothing. That is why to one it is a name of terror, and to another of infinite encouragement. No definition will ever tell what God is to the soul. It is the soul itself which answers that.

¶ I knew a little girl in an East country orphanage who would never sing a hymn with *Father* in it. Her father had been a drunken ruffian, and in her wretched home he used to beat her. And she had taken all that childish sorrow, and she had carried it up into the gates of heaven, so that for her there was a cry of terror in the sweetest and tenderest name of God.[1]

3. The same thought applies to *human life*. In the selective power of personality is the secret of our estimate of conduct. It is one of the commands of the New Covenant—'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' That is a warning which we all need against censorious or hasty judgments. But we must remember that Christ never meant, by these words, to disapprove of the faculty of judgment; as a matter of fact we are so constituted that each of us is judging all the time. Every action, whether small or great, is summoned imperiously to our judgment-bar. Now there are certain acts so clearly good that the worst of men cannot but admire them; and there are other acts so clearly bad that they are universally condemned. But in between these two extremes lies a whole world of effort and accomplishment, and how we shall judge all that, when it confronts us, depends on the deep fact of what we are. There is nothing that reaches us but has its contact with the life which is lying hidden in the soul. Things will be mean to us if we are mean. Things will be great to us if we are great. By all we have struggled for with many a failure, by every ideal we have lost or won, by hidden lust, by secret sham, do we interpret the drama of mankind. A man who has lived purely will find purity on every hand. A man whose life has been a mockery will find all the world a mockery. In every sneer, in every commendation, in every word of praise or word of blame, we are but registering what we have made of life since our feet were on the uplands of the dawn.

4. We have here one secret of *social influence*. To see the best in people has a wonderful power of calling out the best; to see the finest, in a world like this, is a sure way of evoking what is fine.

¶ It is said of Edward Irving that he went about making men noble by thinking them so. 'He addressed ordinary individuals as if they were heroes and princes, and unconsciously elevated every man he talked with into the ideal man he ought to have been.'

If then we have power by what we see, and if what we see depends on what we are, the most urgent of all social duties is the duty of a man to his own soul. We can have no faith in any social service that springs from careless and unworthy character. There cannot be any vision in such service, and without vision service is in vain. We need a heart that scorns what is contemptible, and clings to the highest in the grimmest fashion, if men and women are to feel the touch that helps them to be better than themselves. Unto the pure all things are pure. We see the best, and help to make it so. Every victory we win alone is aiding our brother to be a better man. Say not you can do nothing for your fellows; you can do more for your fellows than many a noisy demagogue, by being patient, loyal, true, and pure in the life which no human eye can see.

Healthy Teaching

Tit. ii. 1.—'Sound doctrine.'

1. THIS is an expression used in the Pastoral Epistles and not elsewhere in the New Testament—'sound words,' 'sound doctrine.' We find it some half a dozen times in these letters to Timothy and Titus. In the English Version it is translated 'sound,' a word which in the early seventeenth century meant 'healthy.' When we speak of 'sound doctrine' we do not connect it with the idea of health at all. We mean 'orthodox,' 'correct.' That is not St Paul's thought. The Apostle is not describing the teaching which he had given to Timothy

[1] G. H. Morrison.

and Titus as correct according to some standard, but as healthy and health-giving. It is our word 'hygienic'—the Greek word in English dress. According to St Paul, 'sound doctrine' is not teaching that has the conventional ring, familiar as the lilt of an old song; it is whatever tends to build up strong men and women, whatever brings a healthy vigour to the limbs, and a buoyant, beautiful life to the soul.

We gather this from the context. See what such teaching makes of men and women, young and old; it tends to happy social relations; it helps men to live a true life in the world. These valuable, commonplace virtues are the things 'that become sound doctrine.' And when, on another page, St Paul gives us the black list of things that are 'contrary to sound doctrine,' what do we find? Not heresies, as we might suppose, but vices. These are the things that are 'against sound doctrine'; and the doers of such dark deeds are those who 'will not endure sound doctrine,' for sound doctrine is healthy teaching.

¶ In one of his Letters Robert Louis Stevenson says, 'My books were still young: my words had their good health, and could go about the world and make themselves welcome'; and the claim throws light on the Apostle's conception.

Our Lord's teaching was not sound according to the accepted standards of His day. To the leaders of His Church and the teachers of theology in His time it was a hated heresy. Christ's teaching was not 'sound,' but it was healthy. 'His word was with power.' 'The words that I speak,' He said, 'they are spirit and they are life.' And this is always the true test to apply to religious teaching. That is sound doctrine which makes good men.

¶ Luther, who made himself the apostle and champion of faith alone, writes of it, 'Faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing; it is impossible for it not to do us good continually. It never asks whether good works are to be done, but has done them before there is time to ask the question, and it is always doing them.'

2. Is it not 'healthy teaching' that we want everywhere—in school and college, in literature and in life, in politics as well as in religion. And we know it when we get it. We have an instinct for what is wholesome and a clear consciousness of what is healthful; and this is Christianity as St Paul presents it—a sound, robust, healthy message, good every way, clear in its principles, practical in its aims, ready to be judged by the life it makes and the man it makes.

This was what St Paul saw with his own eyes in heathen cities. He went about among communities of Christians, and he saw the type of character that was formed by the faith of Christ. He saw what men and women came to be when they had really yielded up their lives to be fashioned by the truth. He watched, year after year, that miracle of Christian history, the making and the training, the growth of the Christian character. He could not miss the contrast between truth and error, superstition and faith, Paganism and Christianity in their moral product. See the Christian in the heathen life surrounding him; see those slaves degraded and despised, but redeemed and made truthful, honest, modest, temperate. The gospel inspired a nobler temper. It restored the authority of Divine law, the awful sense of the evil of sin and the preciousness of personal purity and self-sacrificing love. It brought the new conception of character, of goodness, of sanctity which Christ created, brought it even to those degraded souls sunk so low in heathen darkness and sin. What a miracle of ethical achievement! No wonder that St. Paul could say of the gospel which he preached that it was marvellously healthy.

3. Now, this interesting phrase suggests and rests upon the close and necessary connexion between creed and conduct, doctrine and life.

Perhaps it is not unnatural that there should be a kind of recoil from dogma or creed to-day, because of the exaggerated importance given to it in the past. You know that to hold the correct creed has too often been accepted as a substitute for living the right life. Ours is an age intensely practical, and we are disposed to judge men by conduct rather than by creed. We are fond of quoting the tolerant epigram of Pope that 'he can't be wrong whose life is in the right.' But we are foolish indeed if we say that it does not matter what a man believes, if we fancy that any man's life can be right unless his thought is right. Belief cannot be divorced from life. In the long run, faith and life will harmonize. For thought and action are different attitudes of the same personality.

The man who thinks is the man who acts; and what we think, that we are.

The Gospels and Epistles abound in ethical teaching. But all that is thus practical is inseparably bound up with what is doctrinal. Perhaps the classic passage is to be found in the second chapter of Philippians. 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, humbled himself.' It is the sublimest statement of Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the Incarnation and of the Person of Christ. Yet why is it here? Not in the interest of doctrine at all, but of practice. It is to make the Philippians ashamed of their strife and vainglory; to make them see and copy the meekness and lowliness of Christ. See what Christ was and what He did, and did for you. Think of what it means—this kind of disposition which was in the Eternal Son of God, and which brought Him down from heaven to help us. What a result it would be if Christian men and women had this mind, a love like this which stoops to anything, surrenders everything! If Christians were like this, what would happen? This is healthy teaching.

When St Paul thought of this doctrine that was healthy, he knew where to find it. He found it in the gospel of Christ, in the truth as it is in Jesus. And is not this the witness of history and experience? Wherever this teaching has come, its influence and effect have been such that life has been lifted. All through the generations what has the gospel of Christ been doing for the world's life? Even those who can speak against it—where would they have been without it? Has the world seen anything fairer than Christian character? And the Christian conscience—what would the world's life be without that? The Christian ideal is undoubtedly above the common—a standard, a rebuke or an inspiration; and whatever is loftier in our life, in truth and purity and unselfish love, we owe to this 'healthy teaching.'

¶ 'To preach Christ,' declared Dr Chalmers, 'is the only effective way of preaching morality.' He saw the dreary failure of 'Moderatism' to touch the life of the people, because it was the preaching of morality without Christ. Morality is good, he said, but 'to preach Christ is to preach morality in all its branches.'

Ours is a questioning age, and we need men who can buttress and defend the faith, who can show it still reasonable and well-grounded. But the mightiest argument is here. The evidence of character has been the strongest force that has drawn men and women to Christ. It is still the force that keeps many a man a Christian at heart when difficulties of belief are pressing hard upon him. It commends the doctrine; it adorns the doctrine—to see its power in life and character.

Each one of us may be humble and kind and honest and true, may be, by the grace of God, in some ways Christ-like. In some humble way each one of us may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, proving that it is good to listen to and good to live by, that this is healthy teaching, that these are wholesome words, even the words of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Pattern

Tit. ii. 7.—'In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works.'

1. In this section of the Epistle there are directions to Titus as to how he is to teach and how he is to comport himself, and the instructions are summed up in this counsel to strive to be a pattern. He is called to represent the Christian life, to show the type of character and conduct which the Christian faith creates.

'Pattern' is a good translation of the original, and in itself is very interesting. It is a form of the word 'patron,' and came to mean what it does because a patron is one who stands in a relation of superiority like that of father, from which indeed the word comes farther back; and so a pattern or patron is one whose conduct and tone are likely to be imitated. Thus the word pattern came to be used for a model to be copied, or a design to be carried out in a manufacture, as the pattern in machinery. When we speak of a man being a pattern we mean that he is worthy of imitation, that he is a good example to be followed. He is a model of life and conduct. If Titus shows himself a pattern in the Apostle's injunction, his life will be something to be closely followed as a model.

The object of this circumspection is that the gospel may be commended and that no one may have any evil thing to say of the faith. There is

something in the wise word of the Proverb: 'When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' Men, after all, are compelled to respect the upright, honourable man. They are forced to value his goodness. A good man wins over other men, at least to let him live in peace. And even if this is not always so, the great point of the Apostle is that by a consistent walk and conversation enemies may not get a handle against their religion.

¶ One of his biographers writes of the Arabian explorer, Charles Doughty: 'He goes, this good man, this Englishman, into the heart of hostile Arabia. Doughty was the first Englishman they had met. He predisposed them to give a chance to other men of his race, because they found him honourable and good. So he broke a road for his religion.'

2. 'See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount' was the word to Moses. It is a sobering thought that the copy of the pattern becomes itself a pattern; for that is what the Apostle's words to Titus imply. The world knows Christ through Christians. The Light reflects itself in us. It is a terrible responsibility that the pattern is judged by the copies of it. We say that it is unreasonable that men should reject Christ because of His unworthy disciples, that it is very bad logic for men to pass religion by because of the objectionable specimens of religious people, that faith should be discredited through such poor results of faith in the lives of believers. In a sense, it is very bad logic indeed; for it is judging without looking at the very thing to be judged: namely, Christ Himself; but it is very natural logic, we must own. It is after all not so unreasonable to form an opinion of a pattern by an ostensible copy. And indeed it is our Lord's own test for faith: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Whatever we may say about the popular logic, we have the fact that Christ is judged by Christians, and that explains the insistence with which the Apostle fastens responsibility on representative Christians like Timothy and Titus, since they stand as examples, typical of what the Christian faith produces.

We, too, must take account of this. It is a fact of history that a religion makes ground according to the kind of pattern it sets forth, according to the type of life it creates. The early Christian faith swept the world by palpably displaying its magnificent type of life. It confidently pointed to the fruits of honour and probity, of courage and endurance, of love and self-sacrifice, of self-control and purity. There is the pattern, it said boldly; look at it, examine it closely, judge ye. They were not afraid to make the challenge; and as a fact of history it was this that carried the faith in triumph. Men felt the powerful logic of Christian life who would have been deaf to the logic of Christian argument.

¶ 'Christianity,' says the historian Froude, 'has abler advocates than its professed defenders, in those quiet and humble men and women who in the light of it and the strength of it live holy, beautiful, and self-denying lives.'

3. What have we to say to this burden which the Master puts on us to show ourselves patterns of good works that men may have no evil thing to say of us—and of Him? What kind of judgment will men form of Him from what they see of us? Are we satisfied that the copy does justice to the pattern shown to us in the Mount? Do we take our responsibility in this matter seriously enough? We are always influencing others for good or evil. We are affecting the environment of other human souls. For some, at least, we are patterns to be imitated, but of what sort? In what direction does our influence tell?

Let us consider one or two spheres of influence which will show our paramount responsibility:

(1) There is *the home* for instance. In our family relationships our pattern is being imitated unconsciously. This subtle influence of spiritual environment cannot be over-estimated. It is making character and forming souls, giving the bent and colour and tone to life. It is also the most far-reaching of all influence, affecting the very life of the world; for the whole social structure has its foundation on the home. What, then, of that sacred sphere, where no other outside influence can compete with ours for a moment? There, at least, we are a pattern assiduously copied, and what we are and what we do are woven into the warp and woof of other lives.

¶ C. F. Andrews writes concerning his parents: 'They represented Christ to me.

Through their eyes I saw Him and loved Him. Whenever I used to think of Christ, I would picture some one as gentle as my mother and with my father's genial good nature.'

(2) Take another sphere of influence which usually succeeds to that of the home, and is only second to it in its intimate effects—*friendship*. It is a gift to us, but like other gifts, has its price. We know how associates affect each other, how the attitude of a friend's mind and the quality of his life will unconsciously become part of another's spiritual environment. Have we used our influence for the best ends, realizing that we were ever showing a pattern that was bound to be more or less imitated? There is a wise word from the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus: 'He that feareth the Lord directeth his friendship aright; for as he is, so is his neighbour also.'

In all other social connexions, though not so intimate as these, the same truth holds good—comradeship at work, fellowship in the Church, or whatever be the relation we enter into with others. We have a charge to keep in all, and in a very real sense have a cure of souls. We have to consider not merely how our conduct appeals to our conscience, but how it affects others. We can never get away from our influence.

4. 'In all things show thyself a pattern of good works.' The danger of a long series of patterns without consulting the original, is that errors are perpetuated. For instance, in the copying of manuscripts, every mistake by a scribe is carefully repeated by successive scribes and added to. The copy of a copy of a copy gathers an accumulating accretion of errors. Correction is supplied by going back to the original, which is not always available, as in the manuscripts of the New Testament. But here we can go back to the Fountainhead.

¶ A young Jewess, who became a Christian, asked the lady who had instructed her in the gospel to read history with her, 'because,' she said, 'I have been reading the Gospels and I am puzzled. I want to know when Christians began to be so different from Christ.'

We must take no other pattern but the original. Back to Christ, past Church and Sacraments, past priests and creeds, past Paul himself and the apostles; we would see Jesus. And if we have stumbled at some of the unworthy copies, let us go to the first Pattern and Exemplar. We must let no man come between us and the direct heavenly vision. We must enter into spiritual communion and learn the mind of Christ at first hand. The branch must abide in the vine, if it would bear the vine's proud fruitage. We must abide in Christ, if we would take on His character and show a true copy of the heavenly pattern, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

The Divine Invasion

Tit. ii. 11.—'The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation' (R.V.).

This is historical Christianity in a single sentence. It was good and it was good news—the last immense Divine surprise. But it was also the consummation of a preparation and a process. So long is the way to it, that one of its first interpreters speaks of it as a revelation of a mystery 'hidden from the foundation of the world.' It appeared 'in the fulness of times.' Let us look first at the long spiral way of the gospel's approach.

1. How and why man began to be religious is a question endlessly discussed and variously answered. Suppose we take one of those answers, and say that man began to be religious because he was afraid. It is a fact that primitive man was afraid. Wherever that primitive man survives to-day, he is still afraid. The religion of savage races is nine-tenths a fear. The primitive man survives in streaks and patches in the make-up of the civilized man, and the common superstitions of the civilized, from which probably none of us are wholly free, are rooted in an inherited dread in the subconscious mind of the race. Primitive man could not help being afraid. It seemed to him that he had every reason for it. There was so much in himself which he could not understand. There were even more things in his environment to disturb him. Dawn and darkness were surprising things to think about. Earthquake and eclipse were more surprising. Thunder, lightning, and tempest were terrifying. He felt that he lived in an incalculable universe, with much in it unfriendly to him, and still more that was wholly unconcerned and indifferent.

A sense of being in the hands of mysterious and capricious powers was often heavy upon him. It seemed reasonable to him to take these things, good or evil as they might appear —fruitage of harvest, processes of life and death, of dawn and darkness, thunder, tempest, eclipse—and endow them in his mind each with a spirit. His was a world of ghosts. And not one of them was a Holy Ghost. When man began to be religious, his first stage was to animize the powers of Nature.

The second stage was that he humanized them. 'We impute ourselves.' The primitive man read into them himself, his own qualities and defects, his own motives and wishes, his own passions and impulses. He made gods in his own image. They loved and hated as he did. They had their moods, good and evil, as he had. They could be provoked or pleased as he could be. It was important to know how to do the one and avoid the other. The only way to know was by experiment, and knowing what pleased or provoked himself, this early man experimented with these mysterious powers in his own way.

The next stage was that man began to unify and moralize his gods. Here enters the Jew, and this laurel is on the head of the Hebrew, that his race unified and moralized the idea of God. The mind of man cannot go on living with a swarm of gods. The noblest men felt that no strong or moral life could be won under servitude to gods many and lords many. No unity or strength of life could be won under such an account of the ultimate things. To unify the idea of God took a long time, but when it came it was a great victory in the spiritual life of man. 'The Lord thy God is one Lord,' is written at last on a milestone of human progress in the things of the spirit. There was a still greater victory, and it was to ethicize the conception of God. The race waited for some voice to arise and say, 'Behold, God is good, and holy is His Name.' It was the Jew who said it, though he stammered over it for ages before he got it out. But it was the Hebrew voice which broke into the song of the one and only and holy God.

2. Thus far the path by which the race has travelled toward the knowledge of God has been described as though it represented solely an effort of man himself. But the truth, which turns this from a pathos into a promise, is that the living and redeeming God has Himself been all the time within the movement and striving of the human soul, at work within the drama of the life of man and with purpose of self-revealing for man's salvation. Along the dim path of dreams, by the high and lighted road of the prophets, by the vision-tracks of seers, God Himself has been moving upon humanity.

The final and crowning stage is held in the great word and the greater fact of the Incarnation. This is the supreme initiative of God for man's salvation. It is God coming in new fashion into the stream of human history, acting within it creatively and at sacrificial cost. Jesus is not the hard-won result of the human search for God. In His redemptive purpose for humanity, God reveals Himself in a human personality and life, there to manifest His nature and to unfold the process of redemption in a supreme and saving act.

There are two instruments of thought we may use to-day in approaching the theme of the Incarnation. The first is the idea of *the immanence of God*, and we may be unafraid of a thoroughgoing acceptance and application of its truth. No fragment of existence is bereft of God, who has been and is expressing Himself in all and through all.

The second instrument is *the conception of personality*. It is plain that God can more fully express and manifest Himself in the highest things in the universe than in the lowest, and the highest of all high things in the universe is the human personality, when this is at its highest. How should it be deemed impossible that the Divine Nature, seeking its complete manifestation, should take the form of personality? Incarnation is a transaction of God in the realm of personality. The person of Jesus stands out unchallenged as at least the supreme example of the human personality at its highest and purest.

¶ 'Once in the course of history,' said Robertson of Brighton, 'God produced a man without sin, whose purity was as that of the snow on untrodden Alpine heights.'

The Christian affirmation is that God, who has been moving upon the mind of man in progressive self-revelation, seizes for the supreme revealing the highest thing in the universe, the thing most kin with Himself, which is Personality. He enters into the

stream of human history as focused in one of its personal and individual centres, and reveals Himself in a human life. The Eternal Mind which was in the world, by whom the world was made, who had been ever in the world, though the world knew it not, who had been the light of every man coming into the world, though men received it not, is made flesh, and tabernacles among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

3. Here and in this lies the Christian doctrine of salvation. It is its values and uses for the soul of man, rather than its precise and formulated theology, we may now consider. No one challenges the need for salvation in our human life—for some strong rescue and redeeming. Interpret the need and describe it as we will—in the terms of limitation and imperfection, or of restless discontent, or of conscious sin and guilt, or of social disharmony and disease—'What must I do to be saved?' is the insistent question.

(1) There are many answers, and they all deserve respect, since they address themselves to the profoundest of human needs. From the non-religious side, there is *the answer of the humanist*. It assumes the right and might of the individual to work out his own destiny without reliance upon superhuman aid. It has confidence in the ability of the natural man in the process of salvation. It looks to education, to the arts and sciences, to give man a larger ability to think, act, and care for himself.

'Come to thine own aid, O my prince!' was the ancient motto of hardy but sore-beset Norman islanders. Any voice calling like a trumpet to the dormant resources of man within himself, and welding them into worthy effort, is a voice to hear and attend. But one marvels at its confidence at this time of day concerning the salvation of man; that it can retain any assurance in the face of fact and old experience.

¶ Swinburne, as Professor Pringle-Pattison has pointed out, is the poet of the humanist creed. He puts what was the prevailing mood of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into candid words:

Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten;
thy death is upon thee, O Lord.
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds
through the wind of her wings—
Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the
Master of things.

Could any one looking out on the world of to-day repeat those words of Swinburne with anything of his confident assurance!

(2) There is in contrast *the answer of the institutionalist*, and its complete representation is with the Church of Rome. Its thought of God is legal, and man's relation to God is defined in legal terms. The content of the gospel is a law; there is doctrine to bind the intellect, precepts to bind the will, procedure to bind behaviour. Through the Church alone is God's saving work accomplished, and even so there is no full assurance and security. This is man bound to an institution with chains which cannot be broken. He must submit and obey, and it is only when he obeys that he approaches God. Here is not simply a modification but an obscuration of the gospel wherein the Father of grace revealed by Jesus, near and accessible to every man, is not to be discerned.

From both humanist and institutionalist we must turn to the gospel afresh. Jesus brings the personal individual soul, with its deep needs, and deepest of these its sin and conscious guilt, into personal relation with God revealed as Holy Father, seeking and welcoming His child in love. Here is God's holy love, and here is man's need, and Jesus mediating holy love to human need, with His cross as the consummate manifestation of the saving love of God. This is the substance of salvation. The essence of evangelical Christianity is a spiritual experience of God in Christ, who satisfies the permanent threefold need of the human soul, by revealing a God of love who provides, a God of grace who forgives, a God of truth who guides.

It is not to be thought that the gospel does not confront us with profound mysteries. But before its mysteries let it not be said that we have no language but a cry. We have something better. Let it not be said that it entangles us hopelessly in theological subtleties. In its essential message it is simple, and our relationship to it is a simple thing. Ask three questions—the greatest we can ever ask: What is God like? The answer of the gospel is, 'He is such an one as Jesus revealed and manifested, Holy Father, loving and seeking.' What is man

meant to be? The answer of the gospel is, 'Such an one as Jesus, the realised ideal of our nature and its possibilities.' How shall we lose the burden and crippling of our sin, and regain the fullness of our personality? The answer of the gospel is, 'By entering into a new relation to God, through His pardoning grace, and by receiving into our hearts the power to live as His children should.'

The Epiphany of Grace

Tit. ii. 11, 12.—'The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men' (R.V.).

1. The historic Jesus, the true and full manifestation of God as saving all men, is the theme to which Paul calls our attention when he says, 'The grace of God hath appeared.' Grace! There is no word more vivid, more rich in the whole of our language. It brings before us kindliness of disposition, goodness of heart, welling up and welling out ceaselessly towards those who most need it and least deserve it. In its Hebrew development, it acquires a deep and exhaustless significance, for it describes the joy of a nature that must give and can be satisfied only by giving. It describes God as Himself delighting in saving men; coming into our human life by the lowliest door and into its hardest conditions, for this work of salvation. No one word in the English language is equivalent to this great word 'Grace.' The wealth of the whole historic revelation of God in Jesus Christ is enshrined in it. The great primary and fundamental fact in human history, that God loved the world so much as to give His only begotten Son for our salvation, is set out in this unforgettable term. It portrays the attitude of God towards a lost race, because it reveals Him not simply as He appears, but as He is in the core of His being, in the deep verity of His nature. God *is* grace, and grace has at length appeared—appeared fully, grandly, with infinite charm and winsomeness. It *was* before it appeared, and men, moved by the Holy Ghost, caught glimpses of its supernal beauty, and sang of it as higher than the heavens, more enduring than the ages, stronger than man's sin, and forming the unfailing delight of God in His sleepless ministry of mercy to man.

But through the ages prior to the coming of Jesus that grace had not appeared in its fullness. The law came by Moses, but not 'grace'—not the very truth and reality of God. The righteous claims of God on the love and service, the trust and obedience of men were fully expressed, but not the 'free gift' of God' to men of abundant pardon and all-sufficing strength. The 'word of the Lord came' by prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and their fellow-seers—and men understood and realized their sin and felt their need of the mercy of God; but the 'appearing' of God, gracious and pitiful towards the wretched, plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, saving men from themselves waited for 'the fulness of times,' when God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious; in him all his Father shone
Substantially expressed; and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appeared,
Love without end, and without measure grace.[1]

2. That great historic fact, the 'appearing' of Jesus of Nazareth for the brief space of some thirty-three years, under humble conditions, in a small country, among an obscure people, silent and hidden for thirty out of His thirty-three years, has had consequences through all history and up into the eternities that we can never describe, and values permanent and universal we can never exhaust. But they all root themselves in this, that Jesus was the only begotten of the Father, and came from the bosom of the Father, and is therefore the revelation of the heart and mind of God. It is this that gives Him universal worth, permanent value. He is full of 'grace'; the grace of God 'appears' in Him. The men who know Him best feel it most; they are attracted and awed. His perfect sinlessness is associated with perfect pity, and where the first begets the timid cry, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' the second inspires the hopeful request, 'Master, where dwellest Thou?'

John the Baptist, with gloom on his face, and sternness in his tone, and axe in hand ready to be laid at the root of the tree of Israelitish life, appears the impersonation of righteous severity. Jesus begins His ministry—where?—at a wedding. He added to its

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iii. 138.

joy; for this beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory—the glory of One who, though sinless, is so matchlessly tender and pitiful towards sinners that He is known amongst fallen outcasts by the invidious but revealing epithet of the 'Friend of publicans and sinners.'

Again, what is this noise in the Temple so early in the morning? Why is this crowd gathered? A woman is being led by some of the chief religious teachers into the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. The woman is guilty. She has been apprehended violating the law, and she is brought before Jesus to be judged by leaders in religion who have not so much as a thought of mercy in their hearts, and who are ready, and even eager, to have her stoned according to the law of Moses. But He who tightened all the obligations of morality to an incredible degree turns His eyes towards the woman. Grace is in His expression; gentleness is in His tone; and the message of salvation is on His lips. 'Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way: from henceforth sin no more.' But for the brazen hardness of the Pharisees who brought her and asked for her condemnation, who knew no compassion and felt no sorrow—for them He had judgment; and after He had written on the ground, He rose up and said, 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her,' and so aroused the slumbering consciences of those self-righteous accusers that they could not endure His presence any longer. Thus the mercy and the judgment of God triumphed together.

Again, Jesus Christ is on the Cross. He is being crucified—put to death by men whom He has loved, and whom He has served as their friend and helper in time of trouble. What is this cry which comes from the Cross? It is, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Could grace go further than this? Truly the 'grace' of God has 'appeared' at every point of His brief ministry—in His words and deeds, but never with such unexampled pathos and power as in the petition, 'Father, forgive them.'

3. Remembering how Jesus appeared, we are warranted in saying that His appearance is not only a manifestation of the grace in the heart of God, but also of the *plan* that God had in the government and administration of human life—discovery to us of 'His eternal purpose.' It was the plan of God to redeem. So the Master sets men free from all false conceptions of God's rule of men in the long past, and gives them a true interpretation of the life of the race, as well as brings them that Divine force by which they may incarnate the same 'grace' in their lives.

And if the Christ of history interprets the ages, He also offers a luminous conception of the order characteristic of the life of to-day. For God who manifested Himself as redeeming grace in the history of Jesus has followed on that manifestation, and completed and crowned it in the continuous stream of gracious, holy, and beneficent men and women He has maintained from generation to generation, and in the fact that He still feeds that vast river of moral forces which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb for the healing of the nations.

It is our privilege to sit at the feet of this Saviour. In our quest for God we find Him completely and clearly. He says to us, as He said to Philip: 'See Me and you see God. See Me and you see the Father. See Me and you see God Himself in His spirit, His purpose, His will, His administration.'

'The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.' And that means that the grace of God has appeared for us. We may receive it and build upon it now, and whatever our previous sin, or neglect, or indifference, we may, if we will, experience the At-one-ment, the reconciliation which makes the saving love of God our own.

To hear His word, to feel His grace
  Break on my spirit like a tide;
To see His glory in Thy face—
  What can I know of God beside?

Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest:
  Of all my need Thou art the sum.
My faith in Thee has brought me rest
  In God, my soul's eternal home.

Faith and Character

Tit. iii. 8.—'This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.'

The Apostle has been rehearsing the great evangelical facts, and he adds what, in experience, he had found true, that right conduct follows upon Christian teaching when that is seriously given. This is by no means a universal impression, and it may be useful to examine it for ourselves.

As soon as the assertion is made, a region of exception suggests itself which extends so far as to seem to cover most of the facts. Disraeli, in one place, says, 'A man's conduct depends on his temperament and not on a bundle of fusty maxims.' We cannot but see that a man's conduct depends on his upbringing and his temperament at least as much as on his opinions. Honest and clean-hearted people are found in all the churches and outside of them all, so that we cannot help questioning if belief and character have any close connexion with each other. A good man is not good because of some reason he can set down on paper, certainly not in order to win heaven or to escape hell; if that were his only reason he would not be good. When Burns says:

> The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
> To haud the wretch in order,

he is using words carefully as he always did, for it is only 'the wretch,' the poorest kind of creature who can be frightened into a show of virtue. A man who is honest because that is the best policy is a very indifferently honest man; and his neighbour is incalculably more worthy of respect whose integrity is due not to calculation, nor even because it will please God, but because of a positive bent in his nature.

What is the use, then, of saying, as Paul does, that by laying stress on a particular type of doctrine, you will lead men to be careful about their honesty? The region of exception extends so far as to seem to cover all the facts, but it does not cover quite them all.

1. For there is a prior question of *the creating of character*, of how these better impulses first came to be formed. Suppose there is no instinct of goodness to start from, are we to conclude that 'he that is filthy must be filthy still,' bound to travel to the end on whatever road he blundered into at the first? That would be for many a doctrine of despair; but in the kindness of God, there are forces visibly at work which arrest and uplift and transform, so that men who began with every disadvantage have passed beyond their more fortunate neighbours, and are found at the last with the heroes and the saints. For with Christ 'there is strength to create goodness in the worst and to make the weakest strong.'

Paul could speak with knowledge of such forces, for his task was everywhere to create the very beginnings of character. His audiences were composed largely of slaves and labourers of the rougher class, in whom no purity or elevation of habit could be taken for granted. He cautions his readers not to use foul language and not to steal; in a bad case of immorality he was hampered by the fact that the offender was not conscious of doing wrong.

To our shame, it has to be confessed that in every city there are districts in which this work is also waiting to be done. Human nature has touches of an almost ineradicable nobility, and the long ministry of Christian education and example has not gone for nothing, so that ideals of kindness, and loyalty and chastity are discovered in the most unlikely quarters. But brutalizing influences are at work; boys and girls are growing up without a chance, since all the holy things—love, obedience, reverence, piety have been polluted for them from the outset. They have not learned self-control, they never even saw it in exercise. If consciences are to be made quick, and new instincts and habits created, how is the work to be attempted without a gospel?

¶ In her book, *Children of Dockland*, Mrs Goodall gives a picture of life in the poorest parish of a great seaport, and of the trials and sufferings, the faults and virtues of that great family which lives and works in the shadow of the Dock Gates. 'Sometimes,' she writes, 'it seemed an impossible idea to teach anything at all to a people so limited, so unable to understand even the simplest thing outside their own experience. . . . Much that is lovely in the Christian teaching can never be given to them. It is impossible to say to the children, "God is your Father," for "father" suggests, often, a drunken man stumbling home, a hurried

scuffling into bed of all the little ones, where they crouch and try not to hear the blows that he is raining on their mother. It is not that they know such horrors that is so terrible, but that they know them and do not recognize them for horrors. . . . Such is the ground on which our seed must fall. We have to find a way of teaching which will be so simple that none can fail to understand it, so attractive that all will want to come and hear it.' [1]

The Apostle was never afraid of direct moral instruction, but he also knew that instruction by itself is vain. If you are to persuade a man to make an effort, you may first need to change his atmosphere, and create in him some kind of self-respect. You find him, to all appearances, a coarse creature, with his nature possessed by the clamour of the senses—impatient, hungry, unclean. He scarcely thinks, and the only delights he knows are base. What is the use of telling him not to utter foul language, unless you give him something else to talk of? He speaks, as we do, 'out of the abundance of his heart,' so our first task must be to give him a new sort of abundance, a better furnished inner world.

¶ George Whitefield tells of the brutalized colliers at Kingswood, who crowded to listen to him as they came out of the pits. 'The first evidence of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks. Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and who came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.' Into their sordid existence, without dignity and without self-restraint, without thought or books or prayer, there entered this ever wonderful message of the coming of Jesus Christ, and the whole world was transformed by that.

In the verses which immediately precede the text, Paul has spoken of the bankruptcy of human nature: 'We ourselves were once senseless, disobedient, astray, enslaved to all manner of passions and pleasures; we spent our days in malice and envy, we were hateful and we hated one another.' The evidence of a catastrophe of misdirection and revolt stared him in the face; but as he believed in God he was sure that this catastrophe was within the sphere of God's working, and he was prepared, above the loss and tragedy, to see a purpose of Divine restoration. Thus rejoicingly he proclaims that 'the kindness and *philanthropy* of God appeared.' That unexpected word occurs only once besides in the New Testament, where Luke records of the rude folk at Malta that they 'showed us no common philanthropy.' The shipwrecked company, worn with watching and long hunger, and chilled to the bone, had no appeal to make except their misery; but hearts were touched by that and help was given ungrudgingly. And in God also, says Paul, there are movements of pity, a zeal to set things right, and an energy which rises to meet the limitless occasion. Though man has gone astray, the heart of God is not turned from him; He loves him in his sin, treating him always as a great creature from whom the highest is not too much to ask, and to whom the highest is not too much to give. When in admiration and gratitude, a man opens his heart to this love, it is as if a new Spirit, cleansing, reviving, enabling, came rushing in. New affections appear and new desires, and the old things fall away. The past is sentenced, and the man—imperfect still and full of faults—is assured that God has pardoned him. Can we wonder that this has been received as glad tidings over all the world by lost and desperate creatures, and that it has made them bold to believe that a new existence is yet possible?

'I saw that if the evangelical system were true,' says John Duncan, 'it was well worth believing.' It is 'worthy of all acceptation,' and when it is heartily received it tends at once to make men good.

2. But the gospel serves not merely for the creating, but for *the refreshing and enriching* of character. Even if, without reserve, it could be granted that 'conduct depends upon temperament, and not on a bundle of fusty maxims, the fact remains that temperament itself is not a fixed quantity. Certain possibilities of character may become prominent whilst others are overshadowed. Hosea confesses of his nation that 'grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not,' for unconsciously men become more selfish and timorous and narrow. Beliefs which used to move them pass to what Coleridge calls 'the dormitory of the soul,' where they are not extinct, but only sleeping; and some force is

[1] P. 62.

needed to make men feel with vividness and reality the glory of these half-forgotten things.

Benjamin Jowett reminds us that 'there is a fallen Christianity as well as fallen men'; certainly there is a fallen evangelicalism, which clings to words and phrases when it has lost all hold on righteousness. But that need not discredit the evangelicalism of the New Testament, which aims straight at the renovation of character. 'Ye were redeemed,' says Peter, 'from your heartless way of living, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ'; so if, at any time, the meaner fashions are coming back upon us, and we grow selfish and worldly, and live without rebuke on the surface of life, Peter would have us look at the cost of our redemption.

What do we imagine would happen if all of us realized as in a flash the greatness of God's estimate of our life, and the way in which it was redeemed by a life laid down? What self-searching and dismay there would be, what sorrow for the time that is gone, and what resolving for the days which remain! No one of us would take up existence to-morrow where he left it yesterday, and it would be his moral standards and activities which would bear the trace of that rediscovery of a doctrine. 'Beloved, if he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren': that is John's conception of what most worthily follows upon the evangelical teaching. And Paul is no less emphatic: 'We thus judge that if one died for all, then all died, and that he died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.' There the evangelical faith is seen at its source as the origin and the motive of unselfish living.

THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

INTRODUCTION

The First Epistle

1. *Authorship.* This Epistle mentions no name but that of Jesus, nor any place or date. With the two short Epistles that follow and the Fourth Gospel it forms what is obviously a group of writings. It is agreed that they came from Ephesus about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. Critical studies confirm the traditional view that they had a common author, and he is named in 2 John as John the Elder.

It would betray ignorance or a lack of candour not to recognize that an increasing consensus of modern scholarship sets aside the further tradition that this man was John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. This identification seems to have been the result of a mistake so attractive that it rapidly infected the whole literary tradition. The Gospel shows its author to have been a poet-theologian. This Epistle by its note of intimate affection suggests that he stood in the pastoral relation to his readers which is implied in the other two Epistles.

2. *The Relation of Epistle and Gospel.*—It is almost superfluous to point out the features which mark these two writings as from the same pen. There is the same monotonous simplicity of construction, the same vocabulary, the same emphatic repetition of key-words like 'begotten of God,' 'abiding,' 'keeping his commandments,' the same love of bold absolute contrasts like light and darkness, love and hate, truth and falsehood, the same dwelling on the idea of eternal life. And the phrasing when most similar reads like reminiscence or allusion rather than quotation. The most probable view is that the Epistle was written some time later than the Gospel, assuming an acquaintance with it, and urging the practical application in life of what the Gospel proclaimed.

Attempts have been made to draw contrasts in certain respects. The Epistle, it has been said, is theocentric where the Gospel is Christocentric; light, love, obedience are referred in the Epistle to God, in the Gospel to Christ; and the Gospel stresses the present possession of eternal life, while the Epistle mentions the Second Coming. On these points, however, there are other passages both in Gospel and Epistle which forbid making any contrast absolute.

3. *Particular Conditions Contemplated in 1 John.*—The feature of the age was the widespread influence of the movement called 'gnosticism' which sought to gather up and combine beliefs and ideas from all sorts of religions into a comprehensive speculative system—partly philosophic, partly mystic. Adequate knowledge (gnosis), it maintained, could fit into a vast system of powers and agencies, subordinate to a transcendental Divine Being, all the beliefs and superstitions of mankind, including Christianity. In particular, gnosticism fixed a gulf between this perfect God and tainted creation in which lay the source of evil. It therefore could not admit the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God and favoured the heresy known as 'docetism' according to which Christ did not really come in the flesh, but the Divine essence appeared in Him for a time but was withdrawn before He suffered. Further, the soul escapes from the impurity of the world by knowledge, which enables it to disentangle itself from the evil of the flesh and soar away. Redemption is an intellectual not a moral process.

For nobler spirits this might mean an ascetic life; but by others it was held that, the soul being thus freed, the life of the body did not count and might be permitted unbridled indulgence. This was the teaching and practice of 'antinomianism.' The word 'gnosticism' therefore covers a large range of doctrine, from profound philosophic speculation and religious mysticism, to a crude defence of immoral conduct. Its ideas and language were in the atmosphere in John's day, like those of 'evolution' in the

nineteenth century. Its best types would show analogies with a pious Hindu's sympathetic appreciation of all forms of religion and with Christian Science and Theosophy. Contact with gnostic influences is in evidence in the Johannine writings in their insistence on the need to know God, and in the sharp distinctions they draw between light and darkness, the Church and the world, the children of God and the children of the devil.

Another contemporary idea touched upon in the Epistle is that of anti-christ. Jewish speculation, and Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 8 contemplate a personal antagonist of the Messiah who is to appear before the end. The term 'anti-christ,' found only in this and the next Epistle, is used as a current technical name for an adversary in whom would be gathered up the features predicted in the Gospels of false christs and false teachers. John turns away from any speculative discussion on the subject by attaching the term generally to actual people who, denying the true humanity of Christ, had left the fellowship of the Church. This is evidence that there were disputes within the Church on theological grounds, and that heresy emerged which was felt to be incompatible with membership of the Christian community.

While these features of the background are noted, it has at the same time to be said that no writing in Scripture depends less than 1 John for its present value on anything that may be guessed or known about the circumstances of its origin. When we read 'my little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth' (iii. 18) we may imagine the words to have had a special charm if they recalled memories of the grave and winsome tones of the teacher the first readers revered. But they still make that kind of impression. When we read, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us' (iii. 16) it may not be without its interest that the words may have carried a rebuke to the docetic heresy which denied that the Son of God really died; yet that note can hardly do anything to sharpen the point of the insistence that the supreme revelation of love is the Cross. Nor when we use the sentence quoted in the *Book of Common Prayer*, 'If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us' (i. 8), does it add anything to the readiness of the tender conscience to agree, if we are reminded that licentious antinomians of the first century did say this.

Indeed, the way in which direct controversy is neglected in favour of grave quiet emphasis on truths which command assent and make disputation superfluous, lends support to those in the modern world who consider that clear positive Christian teaching is more useful than argument against religious errors or vagaries.

4. *Contents and Structure of the Epistle.*—This Epistle is not framed as instruction for the ignorant or an appeal to backsliders. It is a meditation on matters on which writer and hearers are in accord, with the object of bringing to full realization what they imply, 'These things have I written that ye may know that ye have eternal life' (v. 13). It has been said to contain three leading statements: 'God is light' (i. 5), 'This is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal' (ii. 25), and 'God is love' (iv. 8). Each statement raises its question: Do we walk in the light? Are we as children of God sharing in life eternal? Do we dwell in love? The tests that yield answers to each of these questions are three—right living, genuine loving, true belief. We do not walk in the light if we sin or hate or deny Christ, and the same tests decide the reality of our sonship to God and of our hold on the truth that God is love. The tests are moral tests, applied by the enlightened conscience, not experiences of intellectual insight or mystic ecstasy.

Still more elaborate logical analyses have been made. It has been suggested that the thought moves in a spiral, or that the leading ideas of righteousness, love, belief are used in the way themes are interwoven in a fugue. As the result of the imposition of such a scheme on the Epistle one scholar ventures the opinion that it is 'one of the most closely articulated pieces of writing in the New Testament,' adding however the rather contradictory statement that its style is 'simple and unpremeditated.'

One might imagine the author accepting with interest and approval such expositions of his work; yet they seem to invest it with a continuous drive which he does not really give to it. What the Epistle says could be arranged in more or less strict sequence along

such lines, but that is not what John has done. He is indeed possessed by the idea that the Gospel verities come to definite practical issues in real life and that they are interdependent. Love is the way to truth, knowledge will produce righteousness, righteousness is the proof of love. His method is to make one profound statement and follow its implications in several other statements, and then make a fresh beginning from another starting-point. Sequence of thought is seen for a few sentences, but not as a thread running through the whole Letter. The Epistle remains in the mind rather for the flashing of its jewels than for their setting. Each aphorism challenges attention not by its wit but by its weight and wisdom and charm. Or take such a passage as this, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure' (iii. 1–3). Such words require no context but that which an adoring heart can supply.

The Second and Third Epistles

It would hardly be contended that these short letters would have won a place in the canon of Scripture except as further words from the author of 1 John. Any hypothesis that they are imitative compositions is precluded in the case of 2 John by the absence of anything pointed enough to furnish a motive; and, in the case of 3 John, by the close detail and note of intimacy which implies a real situation.

The allusions to groups of evidently numerous children, without mention of names, the adulatory tone of address, the solemn blessing and sermonic note, the warning against entertaining heretics, all go to make impossible and even ridiculous the idea that the 'elect lady' to whom 2 John is addressed was a particular woman, but they are suitable if the letter is to a church. The title may sound rather stilted; it is perhaps an imitation of the phrase in 1 Peter v. 13 'she that is in Babylon, the elect.' Or it may contain some irrecoverable local reference. Odder titles have been borne by churches and congregations since.

The conclusions of 2 and 3 John are so similar that the two letters must have been penned on the impulse of the same hour. Otherwise the supposition would have to be made that the little phrases about not writing more with pen and ink but hoping soon to speak face to face were a final flourish that the author had a habit of appending to his letters like a signature tune! The fact that the letters are the same length has suggested that they were written on two sheets of the same paper.

It is natural then to take 2 John as the letter referred to rather disparagingly in 3 John ix. in the words, 'I wrote somewhat to the church.' 'Somewhat' (τι) is given in the best text and it laconically but aptly describes 2 John. For, as 3 John explains, the writer felt that it was of no use to put into this letter the thing he really wanted to say, but had instead to reserve it for a confidential personal letter to Gaius. In writing to the church he does not go into the painful situation which was very much in his mind and would have to be dealt with upon his prospective visit. As, however, a letter was due, or would be expected on the messenger's arrival, or would help to preserve his right of access to the church, he writes 'somewhat.' Because it is meant to be quite bland it is mistaken to fancy that the commendation of 'Some of thy children' is a sardonic hint that of others he could not say as much.

2 John is thus rather formal and without urgency. It is meant to fill a page and avoid a burning controversy. In this mood what a writer says is as likely to be something that interests his own mind as anything particularly in the situation of those addressed. Here John shows himself perturbed at some form of doctrine which impugned the humanity of Christ and gives a vigorous denunciation of such deceivers and a warning against having to do with them. They are evidently heretics claiming to stand within the church and not frankly pagan opponents. The fact that there is no echo of this passage in his private letter to his friend makes it doubtful if it had any bearing on circumstances in the

church addressed. In that letter he denounces Diotrephes, not for his theology but for his conduct.

2 John begins with the topic of 'the Truth' as the sum or essence of Christian faith and doctrine; proceeds in a way perhaps more congenial to modern feeling to insist that walking in truth must be walking in love; then, returning to the doctrinal aspect of truth, condemns the heresy alluded to above. The stress on love may have been motived by the knowledge of the line he meant to take when he paid his visit and faced Diotrephes. The pronouncement against heretics may show a wish to remind the church that he was one entitled to authority.

3 John is as precise as 2 John is vague; indeed the confidential personalities in this private letter make it surprising that it came to be published. It gives a clear picture of amazing circumstances. Diotrephes who had, and delighted in, a pre-eminent position in this congregation, was maligning the writer, refusing to receive missionary brethren recommended by him, and expelling from the congregation those who did entertain them. For this reason it was useless to enter upon this matter of hospitality in the other official letter to the church. But Gaius—there is nothing to point to the identification of this man with any other in the New Testament bearing that very common name—to whom this letter is addressed, has been most kind and helpful in such hospitality, whether in defiance of, or behind the back of Diotrephes, is not stated. This action of his has been worthy of all praise, and John asks for its continuance; and in particular commends to him Demetrius, probably either one of these missionaries or else the bearer of the letter.

The chief points of interest are the notice of itinerating missionaries depending on the help of congregations, and the intriguing glimpse into the conditions of church organization where Diotrephes could with local success assert, at least for a time, such arbitrary independence even of John the elder, and where, on grounds not stated, such hostility was shown to Christian workers. It lets us see that at this early date church life was liable to the same difficulties that are still familiar.

The stress laid on the love in Gaius' conduct suggests that the difficulties were caused by lack of charity rather than by differences as to principle. There is no hint that Diotrephes was one of the theological 'deceivers' mentioned in 2 John.

If the date of this letter and its precise destination could be determined, and an account discovered of the proceedings at the writer's forecasted visit, the value it has for church history would be enhanced.

R. W. Stewart.

A First-hand Faith

1 John i. 1–3.—'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.'

One of the greatest achievements of English music in the realm of oratorio is 'The Dream of Gerontius,' by the late Sir Edward Elgar. At the end of the original score of the work, which has been presented to the Oratory at Edgbaston, Birmingham, Elgar wrote these words—'This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, and loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; *but this I saw and knew;* this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.'

'This I saw and knew.' When a man speaks like that, the world is bound to listen. And our purpose is to ask, Can we speak thus of our religion? Can we, in an age when subtle forces are striving to undermine the bases of conviction, when specious voices are busy whispering and hinting that the faith we so much prize is nine-tenths credulity and bad logic and wishful thinking, when ethical axioms which once held the field unchallenged are widely repudiated, and beliefs which seemed inviolable find themselves fighting for their life, and even religious people grow uncertain in their attitude and vague about their witness—can we, in such an age, stand up and confront the whole world with the irrefragable assurance of an authentic, first-hand experience, and say of our religion, what Elgar said of his music, 'This I have seen! This verily I know?'

1. It is particularly important that we should face ourselves with this question at the present juncture: and that for two reasons. The one is this. Our religion is going to make absolutely no impact whatever on the world in which we live and move and have our being, unless it is our own assured possession. There is nothing infectious about a second-hand faith. What the world supremely needs to-day is an army of men and women who, whether they say it with their lips or not, will unmistakably declare it by the light in their eyes and the serenity of their spirits and the decision of their bearing: 'Here stand I! I can no other. For this I have most surely seen! This God revealed by Christ I know.'

¶ Stopford Brooke set himself to explain how it is that in spite of Robert Browning's difficult style, men are still anxious to read him. And one of the reasons given was that Browning, unlike the other poets of his time, spoke with no uncertain voice. Others were raising profound questions; he was speaking like a prophet of the things he knew. Others were stretching lame hands of faith or recklessly denying; he stood amongst them convinced and unswerving, uttering truth with magnificent conviction.

But if this matter is urgent from the point of view of the impact of our faith upon the world, it is urgent also because of the trials, frustrations, disappointments, and disasters which our own souls are almost bound to meet on their journey through this life. The hour may come when everything about us—our happiness, our grip and self-control, our resilience and tenacity, our very sanity and reason—will depend on the degree to which we have built up, or have failed to build up, an assured and vital faith. And since none of us knows how soon, for him, for her, that hour may arrive, nor how desolating the experience may be, it is the most urgent of all concerns that each of us should reach a point where we can say—'Here at least is something that will never fail me! This master-fact I have seen. This spiritual reality I have encountered. This God I know. And on a rock He has set my feet!' Where others collapse before the strain of life, that man will stand undaunted in the grimmest days, victorious to the end.

¶ Madame Curie, her daughter's biography makes clear, had two master passions in her life. The one was for science, the other was for her husband. Religion, in any form, never apparently interested her. One day her husband was killed in a street accident in Paris. When they brought his broken body home, Marie Curie behaved like a woman almost insane. The foundation of her life seemed to be completely knocked away. 'Tell me,' she burst out to her sister after the funeral, 'tell me how I am going to manage to live. I know that I must, but how shall I do it? How can I do it?' [1]

2. This is the constant note of the New Testament. They are not dealing in speculations and views and ideas, those men. Every one of them could say what Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.' They are not weaving an abstract theosophy; they are telling how God got a footing in history. They are not saying, 'Come, and we will explain the speculative processes by which we have reached our idea of the Divine nature.' They are saying, 'Come, and we will tell you what God has done for our souls.' Take John in this Epistle. He does not start off by saying, 'We think we have found an adequate philosophy of religion,' or 'We suppose God must be like this,' or 'We have been told that redemption means that.' His message is totally different. 'That which we have heard with our own ears, seen with our own eyes, handled with our own hands, declare we unto you!'

This is crucially important. It means that Christianity is not just another beautiful speculation on the mysteries of life; not a theory of spiritual values, or a vague mysticism, or a dialectic about our ethical duty. It is historic fact. It is the eternal world of spirit intersecting, at a definite point of time, and in certain decisive events, this actual world in which we live. It is God visibly and dramatically and redemptively in action, on the plane of history and amid the hard and often tragic realities of human existence. 'The life has appeared,' says John. 'The Word was made flesh.'

'And we have seen it.' That is what made those men irresistible. The thing that vitally gripped and held the world when the followers of Jesus began to move out from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth was the

[1] G. T. Bellhouse, *Our Sufficient Beauty*, 105.

patent fact that they were not guessing or romanticizing, but speaking what they had seen and known, yes, and living in a way which revealed, more plainly than any words, that they were men under orders from a higher power, souls under the authority of a direct, first-hand encounter with the living God. That is what arrested the world, and built the Church.

¶ In the *Letters* which Ignatius wrote on his way to martyrdom, the word 'truly' recurs with a sort of triumphant monotony: Jesus was truly born of Mary. He truly suffered and died for men, and was truly raised to an abiding life. Again and again in his *Confessions* Augustine records that in his spirit he had attained to 'That which is,' reaching beyond all shows and semblances, and touching that Reality with the whole force of his heart. And the same witness has been maintained throughout the centuries from men of every degree of intelligence: 'This thing is true, and has borne our weight.' Bunyan's pilgrim as he passes through the River exclaims, 'I feel the bottom, and it is good' for we have not followed cunningly devised fables.[1]

3. Perhaps some one feels—'That may be all true, but it does not solve my difficulty. No doubt to those men the Christian faith may have been intensely personal, an immediate apprehension: but how can it ever be that for me? All very well for them to say, 'This we have seen, this our hands have handled, this we know.' I wish I could say the same! And I do recognize that for the practical facing of this desperately difficult life, with all its possibilities of sudden vicissitude and trouble and disaster, there can be nothing on earth so steadying and reinforcing as a proved and tested experience of God which is vivid and alive. But how can I get it?

You can get it precisely as those men of the New Testament got it. And how was that? By personal experiment. By the actual process of facing life with Christ. Take any of your religious problems—the existence of God, the assurance of forgiveness, the power of prayer: in every instance, the experiment of facing life with Christ can transform a vague half-belief into a burning, shining certainty!

(1) Consider, for instance, the fundamental matter—the existence of God. How did those fishermen and artisans, those tradesmen and tax-gatherers, become so superbly God-conscious, so magnificently sure that eternal love was on the throne? It was the product of the impact made upon them, day in, day out, by the personality of Jesus. This, they came to realize, as they lived with Him and saw His matchless grace and truth, was what all life was meant to be. This was a disclosure of what must lie at the very heart and centre of the universe. In other words, this was God encountering them. You want to be sure of God? Can you not make the same personal experiment still? By prayer, by steeping yourself in the Gospels, by facing life with Christ, you can pass beyond the religion of rumour and report and inherited tradition, and meet God face to face. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee!"

¶ In his poem, *Martin's Puzzle*, George Meredith tells how Martin the cobbler was greatly perplexed by the unhappy fate of Molly, a little cripple girl, who could 'talk like a song,' and 'give gladness while limping along,' and he felt it was a shame that she should be shut out of so many delights by her malformation. Martin was indignant at Providence when he saw the disabled Molly, who never complains, but reads books to sick people to earn pence, and who is content with thanks from those who cannot pay. She sings little hymns at the close of the day, 'though she had but three fingers to lift to the Lord, and only one leg to kneel down with to pray.' It was Martin's puzzle, and he tried to find the key to it by sifting all the reasons which might seem to justify suffering and make it a gain instead of a loss. But the argument within himself did not satisfy his mind, and the tradition of God's benevolent purpose was still unconvincing. Then how is Martin the cobbler to find the key to the painful riddle and arrive at some certainty? The poem concludes that the rebel spirit must follow the cripple's example and worship her God and serve Him with devoted usefulness. 'I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.'[1]

(2) Or take the forgiveness of sins. Have our own eyes seen, our own hands handled, that? Have you ever wanted to shout aloud

[1] W. M. Macgregor.

[1] Arthur A. Cowan.

with the authentic rapture of the forgiven and the free? 'No,' you say, 'I have not. All that is mere dead doctrine to me.' But here is Peter in the Acts, preaching forgiveness with a passionate, lyrical intensity. Why? Because one morning he had stood on the beach, after a dreadful night of guilt and shame, and had heard a voice saying 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' And though his first impulse had been to cry, 'This is a dream! It is too good to be true!'—he had dared to put it to the test, and found life suddenly transfigured, and all things made gloriously new. Can you not do that? By the grace of God, you can.

(3) Or, once again, take prayer. What volumes have been written about the problems and perplexities of prayer! We endlessly debate such questions as, Is prayer rational? Does it really work? Can it be effective in a world of rigid law? But long ago there was a psalmist who at one stroke cut through all that to the very root of the matter: 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul!' The man had tried it, and he knew. And we have God's own promise: 'If any man open the door, I will come in.' When the Spirit of the Lord came in like a great flood at Pentecost, it was because men, by prayer and supplication, had been opening wide the door. Have you tried that? 'Now I believe in prayer,' you will be able to say, 'not because others have told me about it, but because I have proved through prayer how God can make the weakest more than conqueror!'

It is abundantly clear that a vivid, self-authenticating experience of the basic facts of the gospel was no monopoly of the New Testament. What their eyes saw, ours, too, may see. What their ears heard, ours, too, may hear. What their hands handled, ours, too, may touch. And we can say, with a conviction no whit less strong or assured than theirs, 'I know whom I have believed! I know I have passed from death to life! I know the gospel is the power of God unto salvation! This is no borrowed, threadbare faith. It is proved experience, my own, my very own!'

If we can reach a faith like that, then let the threatening future bring what it may, one thing is certain—our souls shall not go under! Come the four corners of the world in arms, come night and darkness and crushing blows of sorrow, our spirits shall win through unbroken, and our feet shall stand upon the rock.

How Life shows itself

1 John i. 2.—'The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.'

THERE are not a few men and women to-day who think of Christianity as something dull, sombre, devitalized. One cannot but ask at times whence they have gained this conception. Nothing could be further from the impression made upon the mind by the records of its earliest and purest manifestation. In the New Testament there is much that is serious, at times even stern, but nothing that is dull or devitalized. The whole impression given is that of life, energy, and hope.

Consider the passage before us, written, we are told, by one near the extreme limit of human life—an old man who had seen many changes and outlived all his own generation. Yet what ringing conviction is here, and what a sense of the nearness and fullness of life as he adds hurried phrase to phrase to emphasize the reality of his experience—'the life was made clear, and we saw it, and bear witness, and shew it to you.'

Of speculation about life there had indeed been abundance in the world before this time. Ever since Socrates, the founder of Moral Philosophy, said that the unexamined life was not worth living for man, many of the finest minds of the Greek race had devoted themselves to *examining* life, asking whence it sprang, what were its characteristics, whether its highest manifestation in the spirit of man persisted beyond the grave. For all mere argument about Life, the New Testament substitutes its witness to a fact. 'In *Him* was Life'—that is the challenge which it throws out to the questioning spirit of man.

Life is something hidden, mysterious, always eluding us when we try to express its nature in words; yet it is familiar and well known in our living experience, and it has certain marks or signs which cannot be mistaken. Let us go over some of these marks, that we may understand better how we actually know life and

recognize its presence. And, as we do so, let us look towards the life of Jesus Christ, to see whether these marks were present there, that so we may test for ourselves the truth of this tremendous claim that in Him was Life, that in its full scope and perfection it was then set forth before the eyes of men.

1. First we may name as characteristic of life *its Power in seeming Weakness*. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is one of the simplest and most universal of arguments from the world of Nature to that of Spirit. For who that observes at all can fail to note the contrast between the actual insignificance of a living seed and the greatness of the final result of its growth? And the contrast becomes still more striking when the seed falls, not on the kindly soil prepared by the forethought and skill of the gardener, but amid rough and hard surroundings which give it little apparent hope of a prosperous growth.

¶ 'I remember well,' says Mr G. F. Barbour, 'as a boy, a seedling larch which had lodged in a fissure in the heart of a large boulder. At that time it was hardly taller than myself, but in less than twenty years it had grown to be a shapely, spreading tree, full forty feet in height; and the boulder which had harboured the seed lay round the root, broken into several portions.'

This is indeed the characteristic power of living things, that they can thrive in unexpected places, and overcome the apparently strong and fixed and immovable things of the world, because they have the capacity for expansion, for growth. This in turn depends on their power to draw sustenance from the most opposite elements that surround them. The sapling finds its nourishment not in beings like itself, but in the impalpable air and the unyielding rock; and in virtue of this power it not only can live among, but it can turn to the uses of its own development, the various elements, hard as well as gentle, in which it has been placed.

Not less is this true in the spiritual sphere. Whenever we see the hard facts of life, as we naturally call them, yielding before the steady, silent pressure of a hidden force which is able to draw strength from adversity and overcome evil by good, we recognize the working—mysterious but unmistakable—of spiritual life. This working of life has been seen in the characters of the brave and quiet men and women of every century, but never so clearly as in that of Jesus. Amid the hard limitations, first of poverty and manual labour, then of apathy, misunderstanding, and finally implacable hatred on the part of those who ought to have made His way straight, the character of Jesus grew to perfection. What would have been obstacles, rigid and unmovable, to ordinary men, even to good men, became for Him the means by which He more completely fulfilled His mission. Through these things, and not amid the soft and easy ways of life, He showed a perfect sonship to God and brotherhood towards mankind. The power of turning obstacles and limitations to profit, which characterizes life more and more fully as it rises to higher levels, found its highest manifestation in the life of Jesus.

2. Again, life is marked by *Originality*. Its forms cannot be predicted even by the most careful and exact scientific thought. It is said that the formation of crystals bears some resemblance to the beginnings of life; but, even if this is true, the contrast is far more striking. For all crystals, however delicate their beauty and however great the variety of their forms, conform to geometrical patterns. But life is independent of geometry. It is indeed true that every healthy living thing shows its nature in the general habit of its growth. Every seedling plant, every young animal, tends, in the language of science, to conform to its special type; which means that it reproduces the main characteristics of its ancestors. An acorn develops into an oak, not into any other tree, and all fully developed oaks have many characteristics of habit, growth, appearance, in common; and so with the growth of every living thing. But, while every plant or animal is determined in its development by the type to which it belongs, yet there is nothing monotonous, nothing rigid in the forms to which they finally attain. Each has its own differences. As life becomes more free, more perfect, more itself, it reaches a greater variety of form, until even in the natural world, but still more in the spiritual, each living thing is characteristic and unique, or, as St Paul says, 'a new creation.'

This great law of the operation of the life-

force can be readily verified from our own experience. We know that our best actions are often little less stereotyped than our worst. We are always apt to be imitative even in our efforts after good. But we also know that this arises, not from fullness, but from lack of life. If we were completely alive, our best actions would be the most free from rote or rule, the most natural, spontaneous and varied.

So, beyond all question, it was with Jesus. Let us think of His dealing with individuals, Peter, the Centurion, Simon the Pharisee, Zacchaeus, the women who sought Him in distress, the children who come for a moment upon the scene. At every point there is originality, freedom from convention, an entire concentration upon, and adaptation of word and action to the need of the person with whom Jesus was in contact at the moment—that person and no other. No man can predict the form to which a living thing will grow, nor could any predict the least word or action of the Master; but no sooner was it spoken or performed than it was recognized to be the right word, the one entirely fitting action. Such is the inventiveness of Love.

3. Third we may name *Self-dependence and the Power to awaken Life in others*. The living organism does indeed borrow such nourishment as it needs from the surrounding world, but the central flame of life burns on, never for a moment extinguished, and in due time kindling other flames like its own. For biology the individual life is never wholly isolated, but always points beyond itself and finds its completion in the creation of other lives. If this be true, then the most perfect life will be that which has the greatest power of kindling life in others, and giving it free play where it has been smothered or obscured.

¶ A generation ago Henry Drummond argued that the law that only life begets life was no less true in the spiritual than in the natural sphere; and, whether his argument had strict scientific truth or not, it certainly threw a shaft of light into that mysterious region where the life of the spirit takes its rise.

Here once more we find life at its highest and most potent in Jesus. On the one hand we see its self-dependence, which for Him meant dependence on His Father—on whom among His disciples or friends could He depend in the times of greatest stress? It was given to Him 'to have life in Himself,' but never for Himself. Let us go through the story of His ministry again; noting in thought the continually self-giving character of His life, and seeing how the smoking flax of one crushed or hopeless or sin-steeped heart after another lightened into living flame at His touch.

4. From power, amid weakness and self-dependence, we pass to a last characteristic of life—*Persistence*. This becomes in the moral sphere *Perseverance*, the unquenchable energy, the unbreakable resolve to go on to the day's end. This is the last and most searching test of vitality—does it wear out? The supreme life must be one that endures to the very end. We know how the life of Jesus satisfies this test. No enmity, no disappointment, no danger, could turn Him from His course. He had taught that life meant service and self-surrender, that he who loved it must be prepared to lose it; and at last His life's journey led Him to the Cross.

So the great question meets us, Is this the last word about life, that it perseveres to the end, that it is too strong to be turned from its course by all the forces of the world, but that it ends in absolute self-surrender? Is the Cross the final truth about *Life*?

¶ 'If the Cross was all: if Jesus, dying there, passed as others do into the silence and finality of death: if He could lead Peter only to the porch of bitter weeping—then He left the vision of Himself ringed round, not only with the clouds which hide the Father, but, also with the blackness of man's impotent remorse.' [1]

The history of the Life of Jesus does not end with the Cross. Those who had been closest to Him reached the firm assurance—not then, indeed, but afterwards—that His life had not so ended. He became to them the Lord of Life, who had a life-giving power, greater even than that which He had exercised while He walked and taught and healed in the flesh. And the evidence for this strange and daring belief was supplied by their new experience and by their own transformed lives.

Yet all this took place nineteen centuries ago. Has it any message, any sure consolation for those who have looked forth on a world

[1] Neville Talbot, *The Mind of the Disciples*, 99.

dominated not by life, but by death? On many a shell-furrowed battlefield, in many a shattered city and village and homestead, on the broad seas, and in the hearts of mourners, death has established its sway. Can a Life manifested so long ago ever overturn *that* reign?

Whenever men have returned to that source of life of which we have been thinking, they have found it flowing still; and all the conflicts which have brought such immeasurable sorrow on the world and have fastened upon it the rule of death, have been due to their neglect of the life which was manifested in Jesus Christ. For that life, if it were given free passage through every region of human activity, would bring us back to brotherhood and peace.

Fellowship

1 John i. 3.—'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'

1. Everywhere the mankind that really counts is yearning for a complete and permanent human fellowship. The finest men and women of all parties and creeds have at last set it before them as an ideal to be realized in every department of human life—civic, commercial, industrial, national, and international. The history of mankind shows that from the beginning the world has been blindly struggling towards this ideal. From the very first the attempt has been made to realize life in fellowship. First the family, then the tribe, then the clan, and finally the nation. These have been the stages of development. And now upon the horizon has dawned the idea of a real international, a brotherhood of peoples, a fellowship of nations.

The motives of fellowship have varied. Men have grouped themselves together, not always for the highest purposes or under the highest impulses. Sometimes it has been for mutual protection, sometimes for mere pleasure, and often for the exercise of power over others who are not in their group. But, whatever may have been the motive, fellowship of some kind and degree has been seen to be a sheer necessity of human life. In solitude man is weak, joyless, limited. In fellowship he becomes strong, happy, and expansive. It brings to him a greater fullness of life, a commonwealth and a common soul which means personal enrichment all round.

¶ F. Kingdon Ward, the celebrated explorer and botanist, tells in his book, *Plant Hunter's Paradise*, of the deterioration that comes to trees in the Burmese jungle when they have been left isolated from their companions. 'Here and there solitary trees are left standing close beside the road, either to support the telegraph wire or for some other reason; but almost every one I noticed was dead or dying. What is the reason? Probably trees grow in the forest which out in the open cannot survive, lacking the protection of their fellows. At first they strive for immortality by changing their habits, and trees evergreen in the forest tend to become deciduous in the open; but gradually they wilt and perish.'

2. Yet, despite all the efforts made to achieve fellowship, it remains, on the larger scale, a dream unrealized—even where it is not denied as an impossible thing. Why is this? Why the enormous abyss between the ideal and the actual, between what men know to be right and the practical consent they give to it? The answer is this simple and radical one—that the alliances made by men have never gone deep enough. They have been, and are, based upon relative and accidental things, such as interest, pleasure, convenience. All relative and accidental things, in the nature of the case, change. They lack the element of permanence. When, therefore, the relative or accidental base of fellowship changes, the fellowship itself dissolves. What the world refuses to learn is this radical truth, that there can be no real and vital and permanent human fellowship save upon an essential, spiritual, and eternal basis. It is a fact within the knowledge of all that our globe and all within it consists of a vast number of separate elements which cohere permanently because of one central force—gravitation—which holds them to itself. If that force were withdrawn, the elements would fall apart and the earth cease to be. So is it with the life of humanity. The differences between men are almost greater than their resemblances—differences of taste, temperament, race, training, and the like. And the differences divide, and divide still

more, until hostilities and explosions occur, and men are rent asunder. If human fellowship, therefore, is really to be achieved, there must be brought into operation a moral force extensive enough to embrace the entire race, and not only to hold together, but actually to harmonize, the different elements in humanity.

This is exactly the fellowship which is offered by the Christian gospel, and it is not offered elsewhere. There is no other human fellowship which has either its broad base or its dynamic. It begins with the centre—God, and He not a vague and nebulous Being who fills all things, but who can be neither imagined nor known—but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be clear about this. An Infinite Being who is equal to the boundless Universe, the very thought of which makes our brain reel, conveys nothing to us of that idea of fellowship for which we yearn. God as an idea, as a metaphysical próblem, as the eternal force, does not even remotely touch the crying need of our humanity. We cannot even think of fellowship with the 'Infinite,' much less experience it. When Christianity speaks about fellowship with God as the only fundamental base of human fellowship, it either discloses to us a God with whom we can have fellowship, or it simply mocks us. And it claims to reveal such a God in Jesus Christ. Christ offers Himself as the 'Way' to God—He 'brings us to God,' and when we enter upon His way by a supreme act of faith and loyalty and remain in His way by devotion, we enter into fellowship with our God and Father. To condense it all into a sentence—the foundation of all real human fellowship lies in the attachment of each individual to the Divine Father of the human family as made known to us in the personality of Jesus Christ.

¶ Some time ago in China a village pastor answered a knock on his door and found a Japanese soldier with a Chinese woman outside. He had seen much of Japanese methods and was, therefore, amazed when this enemy soldier said to him, 'This woman is in great danger so I bring her to you for safety. I, too, am a Christian.'

3. Such fellowship must be personal and individual first of all. There is no compulsion about it. Faith in Christ must be a voluntary thing and, because voluntary, individual. And here is the whole trouble. Human fellowship is not achieved because men either through ignorance, or selfishness, or perverseness, will not voluntarily submit themselves to the law of their life. Until they do, fellowship will remain a dream. Meanwhile, all who experience personal fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ, are brought together corporately in a new human fellowship in the Christian Church. The Church is a vital fellowship of persons who are in new ways bound to each other because they are first of all bound to their common Lord. The Church is meant to be the visible home of perfect human fellowship; a demonstration of what humanity as a whole may yet be. It is meant by Christ to become the medium and instrument for achieving a universal fellowship amongst mankind.

That was how Christianity started. The Early Church was not a heterogeneous mass of people. It was a living body with varying members, but all throbbing with joyous life. That fellowship was primarily spiritual, but it soon found a social expression. The members bore each other's burdens. They cared for widows and orphans and the poor. They tended the sick, and opened their houses to each other with generous hospitality. That Church was created by Christ; it was also held together by Him.

¶ 'Yes,' says Charles Kingsley sorrowfully, 'men have separated from each other, murdered each other, in that Name, and blasphemed it by that very act. But when did they unite in any name except that? Whose Name was the bond of unity for that brotherhood such as the earth had never seen—where the Roman lady and the negro slave partook together at the Table of the same bread and wine, and sat together at the feet of the Syrian tent-maker? "One is our Master, even Christ, who is throned at the right hand of God; and in Him we are all brothers." . . . Look, too, at the first followers of St Benedict and St Francis, or the Cameronians, or the little persecuted flock around Wesley. Look, too, at the great Societies of our own days, which, however imperfectly, still lovingly and earnestly do their measure of God's work at home and abroad. And say, when was there ever real union, co-operation, philanthropy, equality,

brotherhood among men, save in loyalty to Him; Jesus who died upon the Cross?'

4. The Church's ideal remains the same. Time has not changed it. As a spiritual fellowship it began: a spiritual fellowship it continues. The common blessing enjoyed is that of an opportunity for all to reach the fullest development of personality, for all to exercise mutual help, for all to learn truth and for all to rejoice in the plenitude of life. And the common aim of all must be to bless the world by leading it to Him who can heal its wounds and bring its true life to perfection. The Church then is meant to become the hearthstone of perfect human fellowship: its demonstration and its force. And from the Church warmth and attraction pass to the entire human family. When once the spirit of Christian fellowship burns in a human breast, there can be no cessation of prayer or activity until the entire race of mankind becomes really one in Christ. Hence the Church is bound to be missionary. When she ceases to be that, she advertises to the world that she has lost her characteristic quality and has degenerated.

Now in the light of all this, what shall we say of the actual Church? It is a fact that wherever men have taken Christ seriously, the fellowship which is dear to Him has been created. We see this best of all in small communities where each life is under observation. And it will not be denied that there have been, and are, ideal small churches where the spirit of fellowship seems perfectly expressed within the community. The Moravian Church is a conspicuous example of a beautiful fellowship. realized within in brotherly love, and without in an unparalleled missionary endeavour. And there are many others. Yet we have to admit with humiliation and shame that in many places and often enough fellowship has not been realized. The supreme need of our time surely is to restore reality and force to the fellowship of the Church, not alone for the Church's sake, but for the sake of society, in the midst of which the Church is set as the witness to Jesus Christ. A Church thrilling with the spirit of fellowship would be invincible.

If it be true that the only basis of a durable human fellowship is spiritual, then let us who call ourselves Christians maintain fellowship with God in Christ at all costs. that the richness of our lives may become a royal invitation to the rest of men to share our joy.

Divine Light on Life

Ps. xcvii. 2.—'Clouds and darkness are round about him.'

1 John i. 5.—'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'

THREE views may be taken of human life. First that of the optimist—which is a minimizing of life's evil and an exaggeration of its good. But any philosophy and any preaching that fails to deal honestly and seriously with the sins and sorrows of humanity can never take any permanent hold on the secret springs of life. Then there is the pessimist's view of life, which is sharply opposed to the optimist's, and is a minimizing of life's good and an exaggeration of its evil. And there are times like the present when men are prone to take that view. But in our best moments we have a grand though dim intuition that the supreme principle at the heart of all things is a principle of righteousness and truth and love, and we feel with Shakespeare that 'there is some soul of goodness in things evil, would men observingly distil it out.' So the third view of life is the Christian view. It is characterized by fairness and fullness. It looks steadfastly, not upon some, but upon all the facts of human life, and gives a noble interpretation of them as a consistent unity, working steadily upward toward a perfect, though as yet uncomprehended end: 'The one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves.'

1. Now the two texts before us are typical of the two great periods of human history so sharply divided from each other by the advent of Christ. The darkness in the Old Testament is sometimes deep indeed. Who can read such books as Job and Jeremiah without feeling the profound pathos of the circumstances in which the noblest souls were then called to play their part? Christ has indeed brought life and immortality to light; but it is such a blaze of glory that our feeble vision is almost blinded by its brilliance, and in some ways the very intensity of the new light makes the shadows of life all the deeper and the more mysterious.

¶ Tennyson's *In Memoriam* has this great antithesis for its very soul. What is that noble effort of spiritual genius but just the vivid vision of a lofty soul, oppressed by a keen consciousness of life's darkness, yet struggling with vehement aspirations and passionate longings for the unclouded light ?

(1) This mystery of life impresses in many ways every mind that has been trained to think seriously. We feel it even in the constitution and mechanism of the physical world. Never since the days of the glory of Greece has there been an age which has so proudly boasted of its knowledge as our own. Science is its very watchword. Yet we have seen in recent and present warfare what science can be without genuine religion. Besides, we ludicrously exaggerate our science. Looking at some of our recent text-books one might suppose that we knew everything. But sober reflexion reveals the fact that all this display is merely a kind of orderly and formulated ignorance, and that far truer is the poet's line: 'Behold, we know not anything.' Whether we turn to heaven or earth or man himself we find that all is most fearfully and wonderfully made, and not less wonderfully sustained. As Dr Joseph Parker once said: 'We must believe in mystery or we shall be killed with fact.'

The most familiar things convince us most conclusively of this.

Take growth, for instance. How familiar we are with that, whether in a plant or in a little child. We think we know what growth is. Yet we only think we know; and the question will again bring out the truth that we have merely observed that certain things are; but what they are, and how they are and why they are, we simply do not know at all. Few pages in modern scientific literature are more suggestive than those in which the late Professor Huxley describes himself watching, with a highly trained eye through a most powerful glass, the initial movements of protoplasm in the formation of a living creature. He sees, not without wonder, the plastic matter moulded and fashioned as though by unseen hands with the most consummate and delicate skill. Yet he acknowledges that he does not even know what protoplasm is, and frankly confesses that with all his instruments he is unable to distinguish the original element of one creature from another, and far less can he apprehend how the great invisible Artist so works upon this substance, or how He has endowed it with such mysterious powers—'Clouds and darkness are round about him.'

(2) And if we turn our attention to the moral government of God we find the mystery of life grows far more stern and awful. It is so if we take a backward look and see Job sitting amid the ruins of his loved household and yet crying between the spasms of his agony: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'; or if we consider Jeremiah, sitting amid the ruins of a loved nation, to which he was both true heart and true conscience, yet calling upon the remnant of his people to confess that it was still of the Lord's mercies that they were not consumed. But we see all this repeated in various forms in our own time. We have still with us in all their mystery those strange inequalities of birth, of circumstances and even of rewards. Why should one child be born in a happy Christian home, be free from physical and mental pain and go on to a happy old age, and why should another be cursed in a slum with infantile paralysis and suffer pain year after year, and pass out never having known life. Or why should our own home pass under such awful shadows because a loved son has been suddenly torn from us for ever at the close of a youth of brightest promise ?

There's a wooden cross in Flanders;
there's a grave both wide and deep:
And the lad I loved and prayed for
locked in death's remorseless sleep.
Such doom to love and life and hope;
such bitter end to prayer—
Out there!

2. If there had been no Divine light for this human darkness, no Sun of righteousness for this deep gloom of sorrow and of sin it would have been foolish to consider it so deeply. But we must look fairly and honestly at life's darkness before we can realize the greatness of that Light which God has shed upon it. Both of our texts agree that whatever darkness oppresses the world no part of it is due to God, and that God Himself is Light, and Light alone. The question is: what precisely is this metaphor intended to teach us ?

(1) First of all, light is the common symbol of knowledge, even as darkness is the symbol

of ignorance. How much of the mystery of life that oppresses us is immediately due to our own ignorance! 'All our reasonings,' says Professor Romanes, 'being of a character relative to our knowledge, our inferences are uncertain in a degree proportionate to our ignorance.' And how great a proportion that is! What father limits the management of his business to such methods as his little child can understand? God does not limit Himself to such methods as we can understand in the government of His universe. He works on a scale proportioned not to our great ignorance, but to His own perfect knowledge: and surely it is most wise and reasonable that He should do so. He has been at pains to instruct us that His ways and thoughts are not as ours. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' But what a feeble grasp have even the wisest of us taken of this truth. If we would only think less of our own little knowledge and more of God's omniscience then would our faith increase and our pride diminish till we could say with all our heart:

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

(2) Again, light is the common symbol of righteousness as darkness is the symbol of sin. And who can say how much of life's mystery is due to our own unrighteousness? Nature, history, and Revelation combine to emphasize the fact that God is righteous, and that He exerts His power on the side of righteousness in His government of the world. Nature's laws are so ordained that we cannot do wrong and not suffer for it, and that to do good is ultimately to reap blessing as well as to dispense it. History shows us that evil courses bring terrible judgments on the individual, the family and the nation. As Matthew Arnold expressed it, 'There is a Power in the world, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness.' That Power is the power of God, and the righteousness of God secures the final triumph of the righteous. This, then, is the message of history as well as of the Apostle: 'God is light and in him is no darkness at all.'

(3) Light is the common symbol of joy as darkness is the symbol of sorrow. This at first seems deep irony. How, we may think, can God be joyful looking on such a world of sorrow and pain. But what is the nature of God's joy and how does it fulfil itself? God's joy is not, as ours so often is, a mere self-pleasing. It is the joy of self-sacrificing Love. Thus we are led to the very heart of the gospel—that mightiest passage in the world's history—the Incarnation, and Death and Resurrection of the Son of God. It is He who rises upon our darkness as the Sun of righteousness and the Light of the world and makes us feel that God indeed is light and in Him is no darkness at all. How could we look on Jesus Christ and imagine for one moment that the God whom He makes manifest can be indifferent to the world's sorrows? His is a love that joys to suffer for its object's good. The divine joy of Jesus was to spend Himself for the good of others, even unto death. Therefore did His Father love Him: and therefore must all who understand Him love Him too: and so the love and adoration of all true souls must be His ultimate reward.

¶ Many years ago Robert Buchanan was spoken of as the poet of revolt. Amongst his poems was one which described with poignancy the life of Jesus—and showed Him as a mysterious but pallid failure. It ended with the story of the Cross:

The light shone out of the skies
And struck the cross on the hill;
And Jesus moaned and opened His eyes
And the heart of the world stood still.

Why did Robert Buchanan include the light? In his philosophy the skies should have been in utter darkness, but there was that which would not be denied. The light always shines out of the skies, and man sees it as he looks towards that Cross.[1]

Do we ask then: Is life a penance? No. Life is not a penance: Life is the education of the soul. Shall the sufferings of others perfect them, even as Christ's perfected Him, and shall ours only make us more selfish and imperfect than before? Shall we not rather yield ourselves utterly to Him who is able to make the darkness light about us and the day-star to arise in our hearts?

[1] L. F. Church, *In the Storm*, 60.

Walking in the Light

1 John i. 7.—'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

1. Light and darkness are words which the Apostle uses both in the Gospel and the Epistle, but which he never explains. Partly they do not need explanation and partly they do not admit of it. We feel the freedom with which they are used when he says in one sentence that God is light, and in the next that God is in the light. We feel that in some aspects light and darkness might be regarded as equivalent to holiness and sin, but the text itself is enough to show that they are not to be simply identified. The Christian conscious of sin is called by the Apostle to walk in the light as God is in the light in order that the blood of Jesus may cleanse him from all sin.

What is suggested by 'light' throughout the passage is something absolutely luminous and transparent, in which there is no concealment and no need for any. To say that God is light is to say for one thing that in God there is nothing to hide; if He is dark, it is with excess of light. This is the line on which our thoughts are led by the following verses, where the opposite of walking in the light is evidently hiding sin, or denying that we have sinned. To walk in the light means to live a life in which there is nothing hidden, nothing in which we are insincere with ourselves, nothing in which we seek to impose upon others. We may have, and no doubt we still have, both sin and the sense of sin upon us—'if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us'—but we may walk in the light nevertheless, if we deal truly with our sin, and it is only as we do so that we enjoy Christian fellowship and are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

¶ Dr Alexander Whyte once spoke at a meeting for young men in Edinburgh from the words, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin', and the first words of his address were these: 'There is no such text as this in the Bible—if you take it alone.' He then went on to show the absolute dependence of these words on the condition which precedes them—'if we walk in the light'—and emphasized the significance of the present tense 'cleanseth' as indicating a continuous process.

What, then, is specially required of us if we would walk in the light?

(1) It requires in the first place prompt confession of sin. The sin that lies upon the conscience unconfessed darkens the whole moral being. But to confess is not the first impulse when we have sinned. Pride, fear, shame, and other powerful feelings keep us back. Our first impulse is to hide our sin, or rather to ignore it; to try to believe that the best that can now be done is to forget it, and to go on as if it had never been; to brace ourselves up to bear the inevitable consequences as stoically as we can; in any case, to say nothing about it, in the hope that in time it may work itself out, and that God will say nothing about it either. The thirty-second Psalm, which tells the story of a penitent and pardoned sinner, begins it with the words, 'When I kept silence.' That is the first impulse. But to keep silence is to walk in the dark and to walk alone. The unconfessed sin separates us from God, and from all His redeeming and cleansing power. Of course He knows it, but it is not enough that He should know, it is necessary that we should tell him.

¶ If I have too much pride to confess my sins, I need not expect mercy from God or answers to my prayers. The reason that some people's prayers go no higher than their head is because they have some unconfessed sin in their lives. You may pray and weep, and pray and weep, but it will do no good. First confess to the one you have wronged, then go to God and see how quickly He will hear you.[1]

(2) Further, to walk in the light means that we confess our sins without reserve. Sometimes we do not really confess when we think we are doing so; we rather admit our sins than confess them, and we seek in all possible ways to extenuate and to excuse them. We may confess them in words, but in the secret of our hearts we do not admit full responsibility for them. We think of the bias in our constitution to this or that attractive vice, of the defects of our education, of the violence of temptation, of the compulsion of circumstances. In all such self-excusing there is a large element of voluntary self-deception which keeps the life in the dark. To walk in the light requires us to accept our responsibilities without reserve, to own our sin that we may be able to disown it, and not

[1] D. L. Moody.

to own it with such qualifications and reserves as amount to saying in the long run: It was indeed I who did it, but after all it is not I who should bear the blame. A man who makes it his business not to confess his sin, but to understand and to explain it, no matter how philosophical he may seem, is walking in darkness, and the truth is not in him. There is nothing in his attitude which gives him the benefit either of fellowship with Christians or of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

(3) Again, to walk in the light means that when we confess our sins to God we do not keep a secret hold of them in our hearts. Many a man confesses the sin he has done, and knows that he is going to do it again. It is not only in his nature to do it; it is in his inmost desire. This is the man who is shut up at last in the iron cage of despair. Where there is something hidden in the heart, hidden from God and from man, yet with the last word to say in the life, the darkness is as deep as it can be. The desire to keep such a secret hold of sin is itself a sin to be confessed, to be unreservedly renounced; and it is only when the life is brought into the light by such openness that the Christian experiences of which the Apostle speaks are put within its reach.

¶ In Anthony Hope's novel, *The King's Mirror*, the Countess von Sempach says of a sin she was ready to commit, and did commit in will if not in deed. 'That it should have been isn't bad to me; it's good. That's wicked. I can't help it. It's the thing—the thing of my life. . . . And I like to dream—to be gorgeous, splendid, wicked in dreams. . . . I'm a bad penitent.'

2. Let us look now at the two great blessings of the gospel which are conditioned by walking in the light—the fellowship of Christians with one another, and the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus.

(1) 'We have fellowship with one another.' The fellowship of Christians with each other has its basis in their common fellowship with the Father and the Son, but it is a separate and priceless good. The New Testament epistles are one prolonged illustration of what this fellowship means. It means, to put it briefly, that Christians are people who have in common the interests and experiences which dominate these letters, who are moved and uplifted by them as the Apostles and their correspondents were, who instinctively speak of them as they spoke, and who find in their relation to each other in Christ the most inspiring and joyful element in their life. It is something like this the Apostle means when he says, 'We have fellowship one with another.'

> Two clear souls
> That see a truth, and, turning, see at once
> Each the other's face glow in that truth's delight,
> Are drawn like lovers.[1]

It can hardly be doubted that the want of fellowship, in this primary Christian sense, is one of the greatest wants in the Church's life. Why is it that the powerful and fundamental fellowship constituted simply by membership in the Church has fallen into the background? Why do we not feel the power and the charm of a common relation to the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ, of a common participation in that eternal life which was with the Father and has been revealed for us in the Son? Why is not this the centre round which we rally, where we find our greatest joy, where we can be most truly one, and are inspired for the highest ends?

According to the Apostle, it is because we do not walk in the light as God is in the light. We sit side by side in the church, but how far are we really present to each other? How many of us are there who have things to hide? How many who have done what no one knows, and what they have not told unreservedly even to God? How many are there whose minds are quietly and steadily set on something which they dare not avow, whose future depends on keeping others in the dark, and who do not realize that in the sense of the Apostle the very same act keeps themselves in the dark too? How many are there whose minds have been secretly loosened from what once seemed convictions, who have been intellectually estranged from the gospel, who would create a sensation if they stood up in the midst of Christian worship and revealed their whole thoughts about God and Christ, about Church and Bible, about prayer and sacraments? These are the things which make fellowship impossible. These are the things which make us dumb, because they silence on our lips the

[1] George Macdonald.

language of the New Testament, the only language which true Christianity can speak.

The want of fellowship, if the Apostle is right, constitutes an impeachment of our moral sincerity. If we were walking in the light it would be otherwise. If we dealt sincerely with God, with one another, and with our own souls, we should have a fellowship with one another such as we have never known. Walk in the light as God is in the light, and your hearts will open to each other in Him. You will discover on every side unsuspected friends. You will get new inspirations for your Christian life, new impulses and opportunities of sharing in the Christian life of others. The Church will no longer be a weariness to you, a place to which you come with reluctance and which you leave with relief; it will be the home and joy of your heart.

(2) 'The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' This is not spoken of simply as God's will, as that which He intends shall take place; it is spoken of as actually going on. When they walk in the light, the atoning death of Jesus actually exerts its sanctifying power upon Christians; they become continually purer and more free from sin.

Dreadful as is the power of sin in all its forms and ramifications, there is a power in the world which is still more strong and wonderful—the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It does not cloak, it cleanses. This is what the gospel promises, or rather, this is what the gospel is. It is a stupendous assertion, but the very wonder of it is the evidence of its truth. It is not too good to be true; it is too good and too great not to be true.

Are we who are members of the Church learning day by day that the most powerful thing in the world is not the sin we know so well, but the blood of Christ's cross, and that under this Divine and irresistible influence the dark stain of sin is vanishing away? This is the concern which God has in our life. Others may look on us with interest to see what progress we are making in our business, or in our education, or in our social career; but what God looks at is our progress in being purified from sin. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested; for this purpose He bore our sins in His own body to the tree; and to God this purpose cannot but be as dear as the agony and passion of His Son. Is it as dear to us? Is it the one concern of our life, as it is the supreme interest of God in Christ, that we should be cleansed from all sin?

¶ Before the capture of Jerusalem by the British Army under General Allenby, there had been no proper supply of water for the Holy City. Under Turkish misrule the people were compelled to rely on the uncertain rainfalls of winter to fill their cisterns. Nearly every house had its underground reservoir, but these were mostly in disrepair and required thorough cleansing to disinfect them from the deadly peril of disease-germs. A wonderful transformation was soon effected by The Royal Engineers. From a group of spring-heads on the neighbouring hills, by means of a long pipe, they brought down an unfailing supply of pure fresh water into the city. An offer was made to fill all the cisterns under the private houses 'on the condition that they were first thoroughly cleansed and put in order.' When the sanitary officer was satisfied that this condition was complied with the Engineers ran a pipe from the main supply into the cistern and it was filled with pure spring water.[1]

There is power in the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from all sin, and there is no power to cleanse us anywhere else, but it needs the condition of openness and sincerity. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we do not confess. We cannot be cleansed from the sin we excuse. We cannot be cleansed from the sin to which we are secretly resolved to cling. There must be nothing hidden in our life, no unavowed ends, no reserves. Simple truth is the one element in which we can be united to each other, and in which the redeeming love of God can work for our sanctification. Insincerity, the dark atmosphere in which so many souls live, is in its turn one of the forms of sin from which the blood of Christ cleanses; and as we confess it, and disown it, and bring it to the cleansing blood, it also loses its power. We can learn even to be sincere under the power of the death of Jesus—to hide nothing from God, to practise no delusions on ourselves, to refrain from imposing on others. This is the way in which all the wealth of the gospel becomes ours; when we walk in it we realize that the Apostles wrote for us, and that the greatest and most wonderful things they say of Christ and His blood are the simple truth.

[1] J. W. W. Moeran.

The Sense of Sin

1 John i. 8.—'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

1. The consciousness of sin is one of the most massively attested attitudes of all that we could enumerate among the mental attitudes of man. There is not a human belief for which we could find a more widespread consensus. Wherever you find human beings you find people who are quite sure that there is something wrong with them. This has, indeed, in the early days of human story, crude and even ludicrous beginnings. We have superstitions about the clean and the unclean; we have extraordinary rites and ceremonies which are supposed to perform the function of cleansing. But whatever the crudity or the refinement of the human being may be, we always discover that there is this feeling of a falling short. Whether it be a falling short from the sacred customs of the tribe, from the law which has become the accepted standard of conduct, or from an ideal which man in freedom has set before himself, always there is this sense of inadequacy. Man condemns himself.

Religion contains, in all its forms, and from the very beginning, rites of propitiation, sacrifices which are supposed to abolish sin. Do these rites and ceremonies mean nothing at all? Or, on the contrary, is it not far more probable that they correspond to a deep-seated need and to a widespread human experience? Nor do we find that the highest moral persons have left this feeling behind. It has in their experience become transformed. It is, perhaps, hardly recognizable as akin to the uneasiness of the savage; but still it is there—the sense of inadequacy, of shortcoming, the sense of sin.

Almost from the outset there have been men who have questioned or denied the truth of this feeling; who have alleged that it is a mere mistake or illusion. And it must be admitted that they have had something to say for themselves. The sense of sin has not always been of very great benefit to mankind. It has sometimes assumed perverted forms which have led to horrible and disgusting customs. Early ideas of sin and atonement are often repulsive. And we must also confess that there is some grain of truth in the saying which has been put forward that Christianity in some of its forms has suffered from a sin obsession. But, after all, the exaggeration does not alter the fact of the experience. If men have been unduly obsessed by the sense of sin, it surely is evidence that there is something to be obsessed by. At any rate, there is no doubt of the New Testament opinion on the subject. 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

¶ It is sometimes objected that the sense of sin is the figment of a hypersensitive mind, and is due to abnormal fear: that really there is no such thing as sin. The good is real, evil is non-existent. To this one can aptly quote William James: 'There is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality: and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth.' [1]

2. There are two ways in which men deceive themselves into thinking that they have no sin. One is a practical way and depends upon the will, and the other is a theoretical way depending upon the mind.

(1) First, there is *the practical way*. There are many people who believe quite honestly that they have no sin simply because they have no ideal or standard of comparison with which to compare themselves. Or, if that is—as perhaps it is—an impossible state for a human being to be in, to have absolutely no ideal of life, their ideal is so low that it creates no sense of tension and gives them, therefore, no feeling of inferiority. It has been said by more than one philosopher that one condition of human happiness is not to expect too much of life. And no doubt it is one condition of a quiet conscience not to expect too much of ourselves. It is this absence of any tolerable ideal of life of which St John is thinking in the text when he says that the truth is not in them. 'We deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' The true conception of life and of ourselves is not to be found in us if we are not conscious of having sinned.

¶ The moment we come into vivid contact with God we know that we are sinners. As

[1] S. M. Shoemaker, *Realizing Religion*, 31.

long as we are content simply to live in contact with other people, judging ourselves by their standards, without troubling about anything beyond, we do not feel it, indeed we cannot feel it. For the sense of sin is the outcome of a supernatural impact upon our lives. We often hear people say, 'We are as good as other people: Why, then, need we trouble about ourselves?' The answer is that it is all a question of standard. . . . At the beginning of his ministry Isaiah was probably the best young man in Jerusalem, but when he saw God he knew that he was a sinner. And in the New Testament we find Peter almost flinging himself at the feet of Jesus, and saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' [1]

This practical means of avoiding a sense of sin is a temptation of advancing years. As the years accumulate upon us the idealism of youth begins to grow cold; the generous ambition which we had in former times has begun to fade; and now we look back upon those ideals which we used to have with an indulgent smile. We are now not inclined to take ourselves so seriously. We are more ready to let ourselves off. But the Christian has no right ever to let himself off. He must never think of his ambitions and ideals with an indulgent smile. For nothing less than Christ, no standard below perfection, is high enough for him. How rare are those old people who have kept the idealism and the hopes of youth; and how gracious they are when we find them! It is they who have kept the life of penitence in their souls, and it is they who have never fallen into the delusion of thinking that they have no sin.

(2) The second way in which people convince themselves that they have no sin is *the intellectual way*. We can argue ourselves out of a sense of sin, just as we can argue ourselves out of being in love; and the one thing is just as sensible a course of action as the other. There are many methods by which men have argued themselves out of a sense of sin. But all these methods agree in one point—they represent ourselves, human beings, persons, as nothing more than puppets. At the present time the fashion is to put this in terms of psychology. Men refer their evil deeds and their evil thoughts to instincts, complexes, the unconscious, so that they may find some scapegoat that will relieve them from the responsibility for their own actions. We do not question that there is truth in this 'new psychology'; but it is always possible, let us remember, to persuade ourselves after things have happened that they could not have been otherwise. When we look back upon what was a living experience and analyse it in the cold light of the intellect, it all appears to be not living but mechanical; it all seems to have been a chain of inevitable circumstances. But when we were living that experience, when we were doing that action which we now regret, we were conscious as a fact of experience that our will went with that deed. We were consenting to the act. The feeble or perverted will, the will which does not live up to the ideal which he sees is a fact. And Christianity never says that our act could have been otherwise in our own power. It never tells us that we could have turned away from evil by our own strength. What it does say is that we could have turned towards God, and that we can turn now, and at every moment, to a source of power beyond ourselves. We could have found rest and strength in that larger will in which we shall find our own.

It is sometimes said that the sense of sin is contrary to the dignity of man; that if one could abolish the responsibility of man and get rid of his feeling of sinfulness, we should have immensely added to the joy and to the self-respect of human beings. This, surely, is a strange delusion. It is better, after all, to be a penitent sinner than a self-satisfied puppet. And the fact that we can really, by our own action, fall under the wrath of God is a sign of the real dignity of our status in the universe and of our possible destiny. For we feel anger only with those with whom we are in fellowship, and God's wrath against our sin is only possible because we have within us the potentiality of fellowship with God.

We must bring this whole question finally to the test of experience. And there is, we assert, nothing of which we are more immediately and vividly conscious than that we are responsible beings, free selves. The fashions of thought change as the centuries go by; but this foundation intuition and experience of ours remains: we can sin, and we can repent. That is a foundation fact for the meaning of

[1] J. Arundel Chapman, *The Supernatural Life*, 140.

life, and in holding fast to that we shall best insure human progress. 'If we say that we have no sin'—whether because our ideals are low, or our minds are confused—'we deceive ourselves.' Let us pierce through the fog of sophistication and the mists of low ideals, and we shall each one of us see that we have strayed from the path where Christ would lead us; and we shall hear His voice calling us back to Him for forgiveness and for renewal.

Propitiation—And the World

1 John ii. 2.—'He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'

We are all familiar with the modern dislike to the ideas of sin and of propitiation. In a sense, they stand and fall together. If there is no sin, there can be no propitiation. The one is just as real as the other. We are not going to speak to those who question the reality of sin, who resolve it into the inevitable result of heredity and environment, for whom individual is lost in corporate responsibility, and who have never had the experience of a living soul standing with a bad conscience in the presence of the living God. The whole gospel is meant for sinners—not for men as such, but for sinful men—an elementary truth too often overlooked. It is to men who in one degree or other know what sin is, that the gospel is addressed. It is to them Christ comes from God, and He comes in the character of a Redeemer. He does not regard sin, or treat it, as unreal. On the contrary, it is more real to Him than it is to us. He enters more deeply than we can into all it means both for us and for God. And because He does so, He is the propitiation for our sins.

1. When we think of the forgiveness of sins, there are only three things we can say. One is, that it is impossible. Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: not even God can reverse them. A man who is more or less indifferent to moral interests may be indulgent to his neighbour who is no better than himself; but how can indulgence be looked for from One who is the inflexible guardian of right? There is a certain recognition here of the vital truth that God never condones sin. He never treats it as anything less or anything else than it is. If there should turn out, after all, to be such a thing as a Divine forgiveness of sins, we may be sure it will be such a forgiveness as carries the Divine condemnation and destruction of sin in the heart of it.

Another thing that may be said is, that forgiveness can be taken for granted. Of course God forgives. That is what God is for. His name was proclaimed to Moses, 'The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' We can all presume upon that. It is true that the initiative in salvation must lie with God, and He actually takes the initiative. We can and do *depend* upon that. But we must not presume upon it.

¶ There are many people whose secret thoughts about their own wrong-doing are expressed in the flippant words of the German poet, Heine. 'Ask God to forgive you,' his gentle wife said to him. And he answered, 'Oh, God will forgive me; it is His trade.'

Often we are referred to the Old Testament for illustrations of the experience of forgiveness which are not, it is said, conditioned by anything in the nature of propitiation, yet for depth and height and gladness have never been surpassed. It may not be possible for us to tell through what experiences God mediated to psalmists and prophets in ancient times the assurance of His pardoning love to Israel, but one thing is certain: none of them ever took it for granted. Take one example, from Micah. 'Who is a god like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?' Does he take forgiveness for granted, or does not the amazing revelation and experience of it lift his God above all gods? No! whatever the way in which their experience of forgiveness came to Old Testament men, it came as a marvel in which God was incomparably revealed, as an inspiration to passionate praise, not as a commonplace which called for no comment.

Forgiveness is not impossible, nor is it a matter of course; it is a miracle. As the New Testament holds it out to sinful men, it is the supreme achievement of God in Christ; His costliest, His unspeakable gift. To receive it is an experience as wonderful in its kind as

to achieve it or to bestow it; there is a passion in being pardoned corresponding to the passion of Jesus when He gave His life a ransom for men.

¶ Dr Orchard once told a company the story of a talk he had with 'a good evangelical.' He went to Dr Orchard and very buoyantly and confidently said, 'I'm all right; I'm washed in the blood of the Lamb.' Dr Orchard looked at him and said quietly, 'Did it hurt? Did it hurt?' The man did not understand, and more exuberantly than ever said, 'I'm washed in the blood of the Lamb.' More intently than before Dr Orchard said, 'Did it hurt? Did it hurt?' The man said, 'I don't understand.' And Dr Orchard replied, 'You speak of being washed in the blood of your dearest friend; don't you think that it should have hurt?'

2. Many people speak of the forgiveness of sins who have no idea of what forgiveness means in the New Testament, and no idea, either, of the ways in which the reality of sin is demonstrated there. The one condition of forgiveness which they understand is repentance on the part of the sinner—as though the reality of sin were exhausted in what it is to him. But its reality is not exhausted so, even if we assume, what is never the case, that the repentance is adequate to the offence. Sin is real in the universe, beyond the sinner's control. It is real to God; and before it can be forgiven by Him—or rather in the very act in which it is forgiven, as part of the very process of forgiving—*His* sense of its reality must be declared. This is what is done in the propitiation, and it is in proportion as we appreciate this that the Divine forgiveness appears an unspeakable gift.

The reason why we sometimes have difficulty with this connection of ideas is that we are too familiar with forgiving ourselves, and too apt to assume that this is the same as being forgiven. Take the case of that relation in which human love is most intense, and at the same time most ethical—the relation of husband and wife. A man may sin in this relation in a way that wounds his wife's love. He may do something by which he falls in her opinion, compels her to be ashamed of him instead of proud of him; he may forfeit the confidence she once had in him, and in proportion to the fineness and nobility of her nature hurt her more than he can comprehend. And what then? Possibly what happens in such a case is that there is no reconciliation, but that after a while the offender begins to forgive himself. He has been mortified, ashamed, and humiliated as well as his wife, and it is mainly of himself that he thinks. He assumes that his wife as a reasonable being will at last let bygones be bygones; and in consideration of the fact that he admits he has behaved badly, he expects her to be willing to begin again, and to go on as if nothing had happened.

This is what often takes place in human relations, and unhappily is often the only analogy which experience supplies for interpreting our relation to God. But sometimes what takes place is quite different, far more wonderful, far more Divine. There is such an experience as a real reconciliation, in which the offender does not forgive himself but is forgiven. And what is the peculiarity of this experience, by which it is differentiated from the other? It is this—the centre of moral interest is transferred at once from the offender to the offended. The centre of the passion by which sin is overcome is seen to be not in the sinner, however deep and pure his repentance may be, but in the purer and diviner spirit which has borne his sin and is forgiving it. If this is a true analogy, can anyone think forgiveness is easy, a thing that needs no explanation, and to which the idea of propitiation is irrelevant or even abhorrent? Real forgiveness, forgiveness by another whom we have wronged, and in whom there is a love, which forgiveness reveals, able at once to bear the wrong and to inspire the penitence through which we can rise above it, is always tragic; and it is tragic on both sides—to him who has borne the sin which he forgives, and to him who stoops with a penitent heart to be forgiven. What the propitiation stands for is the Divine side of this tragedy. It is tragic for God to forgive—a solemn and awful experience, if we may put it so, for Him; just as to be forgiven is tragic—a solemn and awful experience for us. This is the truth which underlies all the New Testament teaching about propitiation.

¶ If Tennyson in his *Idylls of the King*, portraying Arthur standing over Guinevere, fallen in penitent shame before him on the nunnery floor, had made him say some light-hearted thing as though her infidelity did not

matter, we would feel the shallowness of that condoning. Moreover, Guinevere would have felt it too.

Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes;
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,—
When first I learnt thee hidden here—is past.
. . . . . .
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives.[1]

The great distinction between the Old Testament and the New, in what they reveal about forgiveness, lies just here: the New Testament has a perception, which was as yet impossible to the Old, of the cost at which forgiveness comes to men. The Old Testament felt that it was wonderful, but the New Testament can say that it is as wonderful as the Passion of Jesus. He died for our sins. In Him we have our redemption through His blood. We are justified freely by God's grace—the Old Testament knew that; but in the New Testament they can add, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation, through faith in His blood. That is the ultimate difference of the dispensations, the last and highest stage of revelation in the new. But on this ultimate difference others are dependent, and among these the conspicuous difference with which we are concerned at present, that while the Old Testament religion was that of a nation, the New Testament religion is destined for the human race. Get to the heart of it and its universal scope cannot be missed. The propitiation is so absolute, so Divine, that it draws everything within its range. If we feel what it is, we feel that it is not for our sins only, but also for the whole world.

¶ 'Some people,' I once heard a distinguished missionary say, 'do not believe in missions. They have no right to believe in missions: they do not believe in Christ.' It is not interest in missions that we want in our churches at this moment, but interest in the gospel. Apart from a new interest in the gospel, a revival of evangelical faith in Christ as the Redeemer, I believe we shall look in vain for a response to missionary appeals.[1]

3. The motives to mission work—in other words, to preaching the gospel—can never be found in a command as such. We read the command of Jesus, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' and we know by experience that for multitudes it does not constitute a motive at all. They are quite well aware of it, but they quite easily ignore it. It only acts as a motive in those who have themselves been won by Christ, who realize what an unspeakable gift God has given us in His Son, and who feel spontaneously the impulse to impart it. There may be degrees in this realization, but it is most keen and vital in those who have apprehended Christ in His character as a propitiation. It is the passion of Jesus the Redeemer which alone evokes a responsive passion in our hearts. It is this and nothing else which will send men for the name of Jesus to the uttermost parts of the earth.

¶ Many years ago Dr George Adam Smith told this striking story. He was travelling by train to Rouen, and in the compartment with him there was a young priest of the Roman Catholic Church. In the course of conversation he learned that the young man had volunteered for missionary service on the Congo, and was now going home to see his mother for, as he stated, the last time.

'Why for the last time?' Dr Smith asked. 'Because,' was the reply, 'the average lifetime of a missionary on the Congo is two and a half years.'

When he came to his station the young priest rose to leave, and as they parted Dr Smith asked him why he was going to the Congo.

Placing his hand on his heart the young man quietly answered: 'The life that I now live I live by faith in Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'

There are gospels with which we would not go very far. They are so poor that we should hardly like to expose them to anyone, let alone to all the world. But if Christ the propitiation has been revealed to us as the

[1] H. E. Fosdick.

[1] James Denney.

power of God to save, then we have something in our hearts that lifts us above the need of commands and makes secondary motives unreal. The only motives worth considering in this region are the irresistible motives. We get nothing until we get men who say, 'We cannot but speak. Necessity is laid upon us. We are debtors.' What we want is not missionaries, in the narrower sense, but evangelists—not a new interest in the non-Christian world, but a new interest in the gospel—not men who want to preach to the heathen, but men who cannot but preach where they are. That is the stock from which alone the missionary force can be recruited—the men and women in whom all emotions and motives are swallowed up in the sense of what they owe to the Redeemer.

The Test of Personal Religion

1 John ii. 3.—'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.'

The physician uses a stethoscope when he listens to the movement of the heart and lungs to discover if they are functioning properly. He is sounding the patient to find out if these organs are in good order. There are times when we wish to test our personal religion and ascertain whether it is healthy and valid. How can we hear God within, how can we be sure that our heart is right with Him and that our relations with Him are regular and genuine. 'That ye may know that ye have eternal life,' says John. Exactly! We would like to know that. So we must apply the stethoscope to our religious experience, and verify that all is well there, or detect what is wrong and use a prompt corrective.

It is our practical and doctrinal position that shows ultimately whether God is dwelling in us. Our moral conformity to His character and our convinced adherence to His truth reveal whether our personal religion is the real thing. An ethical resemblance to God and an intelligent appreciation of Him give the conclusive proof that eternal life has been communicated to us and that we are partakers of the Divine nature. So it is quite easy to find out if our heart is right with God. We do not need to be introspective and analyse our moods and feelings. All we have to do is to let our conduct and belief tell their own story.

1. Obedience to His righteous orders proves that we have been at close quarters with God and have had discerning contact with Him. 'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' The word 'keep' means an alert and vigilant obedience, like that of a seaman who watches the weather and the tides, lest he be caught unawares. Galsworthy says of our naval officers: 'The sea is never chained. There is in the eyes of our sailors a look which any man might covet—a steady fronting of something inscrutable, shifting, and dangerous.' We are afloat amid forces of evil that may surprise and destroy us at any moment, and so we must be attentive to the protecting instructions of God. It will not suffice merely to keep our eyes fixed on the sea of troubles, the temptations and perils around us, for that would unman us and we would lose heart. We must look away from ourselves to God who is our defence, our guide, and our power of victory. So we watch His commandments, which steady and enlighten us in the stormy dark.

Now it is this watchfulness that reveals the indwelling God and shows He is busy within. We can be sure He is there, if we are observant of His orders. And what happens next? Why, the inspiring discovery that 'his commandments are not grievous,' not an irksome pressure but a welcome preventive of evil, the safeguard provided by Divine love against our often hoodwinked selves. 'By them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.' Believing hearts have sailed away on a great adventure, and they will not only encounter tempests but also taste noble satisfactions and behold the wonders of the Lord. A modern poet has told of a mariner's enchanting experience:

He spake of his own deeds: of how he sailed
One summer's night along the Bosporus,
And he—who knew no music like the wash
Of waves against the ship, or wind in shrouds—
Heard then the music on that wooded shore
Of nightingales, and feared to leave the deck,
He thought 'twas sailing into Paradise.

'He feared to leave the deck'—here was one watching and listening, because of the new melody that sang in his life. There was a fresh gladness in his heart that voyage. Is not that a glimpse of the jubilant note that comes through moral channels of obedience to God? To keep a sharp look-out on His commandments may seem a stiff proposition, but it is a heart-stirring revelation that God is with us and in us. So we fear to leave the deck or forsake the post of duty, lest we should miss the sound of God within, leading and carrying us forward. Our decision to take His way and not our own way, our observant conformity to His orders certifies our personal religion as genuine, and we perceive with a happy sense of relief that we have been in touch with God. 'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.'

2. But what precisely are these commandments? The commandments are detailed as twofold, and have a double point. They involve duty and doctrine, practice and belief, conduct and conviction.

(1) The commandments of God require love toward others. The Epistle affirms, 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.' The thing which proves our fellowship with the Divine Father is our affection for the family-fellowship, the Christian community, which is the Church. Our love for the Church and its members, our desire to 'do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith,' discloses that we are in right relations with God. This provides evidence that we have eternal life. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' Sir Christopher Wren was a prince in many realms of science as well as in architecture, and in 1659 he pioneered a medical advance and discovered blood-transfusion, which has saved many lives to-day; but he considered St Paul's Cathedral his greatest work, and in his later years loved to go in and sit in its lofty precincts. The Church has an incomparable mission, because the saving of character is more momentous than the saving of life. Whatever turns men to the worship of God is more decisive for human progress and happiness than scientific discoveries and material improvements, and that is why those who love the Church attest the living presence of God in their heart.

¶ To the end of his life Gladstone realized the enormous importance and urgency of the work of the Christian Church. He was an old man when he wrote to the Duke of Argyll and expressed his deep conviction that 'we politicians are children playing with toys in comparison to that great work of and for mankind which has to be done and will be done in restoring belief.'[1]

But love must not be narrowed down to a churchy devotion, or confined to an ecclesiastical group. The brotherly sense has a wider sweep, and reaches out to share its vision and inspiration with those who have lost their way in the unlit labyrinth of life. It carries the message of salvation to 'them that are without.' A real devotion to the Church makes a road for others, that they may avoid blind alleys and find their way home to the truth and power in Jesus Christ. Those engaged on such a mission disclose the Divine presence in their life, and there is no doubt that God is abiding in them.

Christian love, however, will go still further, and include the total personality of man, body as well as soul, in its ministry. It will educate the public conscience in social evils and press for the removal of economic maladjustments and miseries. The Church is not a political reformer, but the Church should rouse the determination to reform. This is involved in loving the brethren, and the man whose favourite slogan is 'No politics in the pulpit' thereby reveals that his relations with God are defective, and that his heart is not beating rhythmically with the Father, but is falling short in brotherly love.

¶ There are those who say that the Church should mind its own job and keep out of politics. If it isn't the Church's job to create public sentiment for a reform that is in the best interests of all its members and the community, whose job is it? When Jacob A. Riis, an intimate friend of Theodore Roosevelt, was working for his scheme of housing reform, he said: 'I want the Church at its back. It is from that quarter that I expect the strongest blows to be struck.'

(2) The commandments of God are embodied

[1] *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone.*

in Jesus Christ. All the Divine orders are made manifest in Him who is 'the image of the invisible God,' the speaking likeness of the Father. It is therefore necessary to have an adequate doctrine of Jesus Christ, and to put the true valuation on Him as Divine. To recognize the magnitude of Jesus as the law, the purpose, the character of God unveiled tells that we are in healthy converse with God: 'whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.'

The contemporary challenge to the Christian ethic has given new weight to the doctrine of Christ's Divinity and made its application urgent. A prominent Nazi said to Sir Philip Gibbs: 'Christianity is a weak kind of religion, very unscientific, very much out of touch with the realities of human nature, denying the joy of life.' This pulls us up with a jolt. When the Christian standpoint is dismissed as a delusion and a mistake, we need the certainty that Jesus' teaching on God and man has Divine authority and is so backed by the governing power of the universe that it is an absolute on which we can rely. He must have the majesty of finality if He is to be trusted with our destiny. So we see why John says that confidence in Jesus as Divine, as having the sanction and might of God behind Him, reveals a personal religion which is comprehending and intimate. It shows that God is resident within, enabling us to see the saving truth, which some have missed. 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.'

'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we do keep his commandments.' The commandments of God are embodied in Jesus Christ, and we keep these commandments by recognizing that Jesus Christ is exalted in heaven and exalting Him to the throne of our life as Saviour and Lord. To be personally attached to Jesus Christ as our Divine Redeemer and Master is to be in union with God and to have God living in us, to possess eternal life.

¶ Mark Rutherford describes Miss Tippit, the elderly boarding-house keeper, unread, nervous, and overwrought, yet her spirit has some beautiful mystery about it, and he says: 'There was a secret in her history, her friends said, for though they knew nothing of her little bit of private religion, and although she never admitted a soul into the little oratory where the image of her Saviour hung, everybody was aware that there was "a something about her" which took her out of the class to which she externally appeared to belong, and of course the theory was an early love disappointment. It was utterly baseless, for Miss Tippit was touched with supernal grace.'

He Banishes the Darkness

1 John ii. 8.—'The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.'

That seems a bold thing to say in days like these, when a mere glance at the headlines of the morning newspaper is enough to blot out the very sunlight that streams through the window. But the days in which this truth was first spoken were even darker. Do not let us forget that. Christianity came into being precisely at a time when war and cruelty and lust and unbelief 'made human life a hell.' Yet John could write these amazing and soul-stirring words. Like some lonely watcher on the housetop, who has been looking for the dawn and at last sees it coming up over the eastern hills, he sounds out his message, 'The darkness is past and the true light now shineth.'

It is not easy to put into words what Christ has done for the world and what He does for those who know Him. That is understandable. If you were asked to say exactly what some fine friendship meant to you, what would you say? Or if you were asked what the love of home had brought into your life, how would you put it? The early Christians had just the same difficulty in saying what Christ had done for them. But one of their favourite ways was to say that He had brought them 'out of darkness into his marvellous light.' This kind of imagery has been very popular among those who have come to know Christ. A monk in the Middle Ages, whose life had been changed through reading just one word in the newly translated Bible, told what had happened to him in this way. 'It was as if, in the middle of a dark night, day suddenly broke.' Light illuminates. It makes things clear. It banishes the shadows and distortions, and shows us things as they are. It enables us to see

realities. That, in simple words, is what Christ has done for us by His coming.

Two thousand years ago at Bethlehem,
God lit a candle: to its radiant light
Came men from near and far.
It still lights up the darkness of the world,
Still to the hearts of men who come to seek,
It is the Guiding Star.

Let us think of one or two directions in which this is true.

1. First of all, *He banishes the darkness from the face of God.* It was that for which pre-eminently He came. 'God hath shined in our hearts,' says Paul, 'giving us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.' In Him, as it were, God has flung open a window and shown Himself to us, looking out on our world in the face of Jesus Christ. How do we know? How do we know that light is light? Because it produces an impression and awakens a response from the nerves of the eye which only light can make. How did the first disciples know that this was the glory of God, the unseen reality? Because of the effect His glory had on them. It banished their fears; it awakened their worship; it satisfied that longing in their hearts which only God can fill. When they trusted that love, they found themselves possessed with power to meet life and suffering and sin and to overcome them. There is no other way of proof. You cannot prove the reality or the character of God by logic, any more than you can prove the existence of beauty or love or goodness by argument. It is something you have to see, or you know nothing of it. But when you have seen the light, you know.

Who so hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound, or doubt Him, or deny.

That is the final proof. God is not merely an idea which you have to grasp. He is Someone you have to know as you know a friend. He is Someone you have to see with the eyes of the soul, as you see love or beauty or goodness. But He is there in Jesus, offering Himself to us, shining into our hearts if we will unbare them to His light, 'giving us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.' 'The darkness is past; the true light now shineth.'

2. *Christ has banished the darkness from the world.* That is not to say that He has banished all that is foul and ugly and sordid and base. But He has done this, at least for those who have seen His light, and for a great many more who do not acknowledge Him. He has banished the falsehood and the glamour and the unreality that once hid these things and their nature. He has made us see them as they are. The falsehood, the dead conscience about wrong things—that is the darkness that keeps us from seeing reality; and Christ has banished that for those who have seen Him. For instance, He has not banished selfishness, but to-day we see it as we never saw it before. The selfish man is repudiated and scorned. To be called selfish is the last thing any one wants to have said about him. Once it was considered a mere failing. Now it is beginning to be realized as a deformity, a curse, a chain. The psychologists have helped us to that discovery. They assure us that the most common root of misery and unhappiness is self-centredness. The egoist is mentally sick. He has never fully grown up. But Jesus taught that long ago. We have not got rid of selfishness, but we know the ugly thing for what it is.

Again, we have not got rid of greed and injustice—far from it. The inequalities of life which we see all around us are still there, though they are not so grievous as they were. But we hate to see these things to-day. They are getting on our consciences. We are beginning to see them as they are—things which, in a world where men are brothers, ought not to be. We have no peace about them any more, if we have seen Christ.

Again, He has not banished war. It is still with us, still cursing the earth like some fiery volcano, and covering the land with death and destruction. It is still with us; but the light is up. We do not glory in it any more, unless, like some dictators, we are still obsessed by the lust of power. Ordinary sensible people hate war. We realize that it is a desperate outrage on humanity. It is with heavy hearts that we meet force with force. We know that the root of it is sin, in which we are all involved. It is part of God's judgment upon our way of common life that it has brought us into a

situation from which there is no escape except in war.

It is in many ways a darker world because Christ has come. Our eyes are opened. We see realities and some of them are very ugly, like great slagheaps in a dreary landscape when the sun is up. But we see more than that. We see the real things and they shine. We see the glory of service and the beauty of self-forgetfulness and the happiness of living for others. We know, whatever people may say, that these are the real things, and in them is the meaning of life.

¶ Henry Drummond wrote, 'I have seen almost all the beautiful things God has made. I have enjoyed almost every pleasure He has planned for man; and yet, looking back I see, standing out above all the life that has gone, four or five short experiences when the love of God reflected itself in some poor imitation, some small act of love of mine, and these seem to be the things which alone of all one's life abide.'

3. *Christ has banished the darkness from the face of the future.*—That lay heavy on the minds of people. What was ahead? They could see nothing but gloom. What was to happen to their world, to themselves, to all that they held dear? What was to come of all their struggles and their toil? The future looked very dark. But Christ came and the darkness was banished. They could not see far ahead, it is true. But they could see this much. There was light ahead; and beyond the horizon of time—the great unsolved mystery—there was light also, the light of His face, triumphant and shining with the love of God. They could look death in the face; for it had become transparent. They looked through it and saw Christ waiting for them on the other side.

We need this assurance to-day. There is little else we can hold on to at the moment except that Christ will triumph, and that means victory for all those who have caught His light. It looks to-day as if a tide had set in away from Christ. People tell us His day is done. But they are wrong. It has hardly begun. The light is up and that light cannot be extinguished by any darkness. The real truth is that Christ is far ahead of us all. The world has not yet come to the stage when it can appreciate Him. We cannot understand the might and majesty of this meek Man on His Cross. But He can wait His day; and it will come.

¶ In one of his last books, Studdert Kennedy said, 'We are putting our trust in force and fear, but not wholeheartedly. The strong man is asserting his rights, but his hand trembles and he is not sure. There are powers that hold him back. The strong man is not what he was. That strange man on the Cross worries him. He is uncomfortable about Christ.'

The call to us is that we should be more bold to walk in this light. It is to step out of the half-blindness of a casual faith into the full light of Christ. It is to accept the guiding of this light, to let the glory of it sink down into our souls, into the dark depths where fear and lovelessness have their roots. For that is what is wrong with us when we are overcome by these things. The love of God in Christ has not been allowed to strike right down into these subconscious depths where we are still held in the grip of what is primitive and blind, and to dislodge the demons of care and fear and pride from their hiding places. There are parts of all of us still held in the grip of night and darkness.

But how shall we find this light? In the face of Jesus Christ. Let Him shine in. Take time to get face to face with His glory—His love and mercy and self-sacrifice—till the power of it strikes home and the eternal world becomes real and the real things in it begin to shine.

Youth's Strategic Places

1 John ii. 14.—'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.'

This description 'young men' probably indicates that those to whom this part of St John's letter was addressed were seriously engaged in the work of grounding their character, forming their habits, disciplining their inclinations, and confirming the choice all must make between good and evil. He was not writing to those who had failed in the struggle, and had accepted their defeat. He was writing to those who had shown promise of better things, who were evidently pressing 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

We do not suppose that the Apostle credits the young men to whom he wrote with having won a victory which is never finally decided on this side the grave, or with having attained to a moral altitude outside the reach of their years. When he says, 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong,' he may be understood as referring to a strength consistent with, and yet peculiar to, their years—a strength the whole force of which was set in a right and healthy direction.

'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.' Strong in what sense? How may we give the words a useful setting, as a reminder and a call to the young men of to-day?

1. In the first place, one great constituent of strength which is, or ought to be, the special possession of young life is—*Hope*. It is a common remark that as we grow older we become chary of convictions, and content ourselves with opinions. And it has to be admitted that age, even with good people, changes to a large extent their centre of gravity from hope to faith.

The loss of youth is not so much in the flight of years, as in the stealing away of our hopes. We may be justified by faith, but we are saved by hope, in theology and in life. There are twenty men who have faith in Christ for one man who has hope that His spirit will ever incarnate itself in the life of the world. As we get older, most of us are only too glad to keep our faith in great principles, without hoping much for them. The usual product of experience, and more especially experience gained in attempting some great reform, is, as Dr Martineau remarks, 'a certain caution and lowering of hope. When the spent enthusiast looks back upon the riches of his early hopes, and the poverty of his achievements, he is tempted to regret the magnitude of his aims, and advise a zeal too temperate to live through the frosts of inevitable disappointments.'

Nothing more damps the ardour of young people with good stuff in them than this caution called wisdom, which so often creeps over us as we advance in years. Then it is so frequently the case that the precepts that most naturally flow from our lips are the negatives that stifle hope. 'I can no longer afford convictions,' said a man, 'I have come to limit myself to opinions; they can be held at less risk, and changed at less cost.' And the disposition to regard both faith and hope in great things as subject to the same insecure and miserable tenure, is apt to grow with the growing years, until we come to sympathize with nothing which cannot take out a policy of assurance.

When we are young we may be susceptible to the new only because it is new to us. We are ready to welcome in book or speech anything which charms us with a novelty we readily mistake for originality. After we have crossed a line it may be well that most of us should become a bit obstinate, a little stiff in our beliefs, lest we be blown about by every wind of doctrine. At the same time, there is always the danger of becoming so rigid in our opinions and faith as to permit no horizon of hope. There are many, in our churches and outside them, who, from want of the hope that saves, are dying from the top downwards.

And among them is an increasing proportion of young men. We hear them boast that they have no ideals, no hopes or aspirations that are above the earth earthy. For once, at any rate, they have a conviction, and it is, that man lives by bread alone, that his life is in the abundance of the things which he possesses. They are too 'knowing' to be caught prisoners by ideas, too much 'men of the world' to concern themselves about the 'Utopias of religion.' And they call it strength. Strength! It reminds one of the bitter remark of an historian on the march of the Roman legions: 'They make a solitude, and call it peace.'

¶ 'My dear Aunt,' says a young Oxford man in Sir Phillip Gibbs' *Young Anarchy*, 'you mistake the spirit of modern youth—if my friends will allow me to use that detestable word. They have no convictions. They are lookers-on at this rather ridiculous game called life, trying to find some clue to its tangle of absurdities, but very doubtful whether such a clue is there. They are amused and interested at times, but generally a little bored . . . . These men of post-war age have no faith in human progress or human nature.'

The young man who is strong is he who has the moral genius of his years. He does not deny that man lives by bread, but he does deny that man lives by bread alone. He has faith in the upward trend of the world; and he has the hope which can give to faith its adequate translation. He does not believe that brute

force shall for ever trample splendid intelligence underfoot, or that we must always stand on the margin of the dark river of wrong, in the unfathomed depths of which lie mysteries of terror—the despair of man, the sorrow of God. He has faith in the great day of the Lord ; and with the splendid optimism, the hope peculiar to his years, he cries : 'I can, and I will, hasten the coming of my Lord.' This is one great element of a young man's strength—hope in goodness, which goes so far to sustain the toil that can realize it.

¶ 'We must all be prepared,' says Albert Schweitzer, 'to find that life tries to take from us our belief in the good and the true, and our enthusiasm for them.' 'If all of us could become what we were at fourteen, what a different place the world would be!' he exclaims, and adds that the great secret of abiding success is to go through life as a man who never gets used up.

2. Another factor in this strength is—*Freedom*. And by that we mean immunity from certain responsibilities. Young men, up to a given period, are, as never again, free to sacrifice for what look like the forlorn hopes and apparently lost causes of humanity. 'My six reasons for taking no risks,' said a man in the American Civil War, 'are a wife and five children.'

We often hear men lament, and it may be sincerely, that they cannot afford to face the practical logic of their social, political, and religious beliefs. They shrink from the consequences of the good fight of faith. 'Had I only myself to consider,' says one, 'how gladly would I sacrifice myself to attack this wrong or that iniquity.' We need offer no opinion about the moral quality of such a position ; enough to say that it is idle to ignore, or even to underrate, the force of it. There are circumstances which are too strong for most men after they have put themselves in a given relation to circumstances. It is here the young man has a great advantage ; he is at an age when he can afford risks ; let him use it before his years are mortgaged by other demands.

In public life he can base his efforts on the fact that there are tremendous evils that need resistance, that there are sacred causes which need assistance. He can afford, as never again, to close with the truth that there is a corporate life, a public virtue, a humanity of the body politic, with laws, responsibilities, and duties. In social life he can refuse to bow to an arbitrary and often empty fashion. He can be a living protest against the tyranny and lust of money. He can stand for the sane and rational ideas and habits of life. And in religion he can accept the teaching and obey the commands of Christ without any overwhelming temptation to escape them behind some exegetical device or the plea of expediency. He can be a soldier of the Cross, and have himself placed in the forefront of the battle. He can take daring risks for the Captain of his salvation and the race of which he forms a part. I have written unto you, young men, because you can afford to be strong.

3. A third consideration in a young man's strength is—*Audacity*. We might call it courage, but it is that plus something else. It is courage carried to a point of daring that amounts to audacity, or, as the world would call it, foolhardiness. It is the merciful blindness which will not see difficulties ; it is the glorious recklessness which will not be stopped by them. It is neither blindness nor recklessness ; it is the baptism with which a young man must be baptized whose life is penalized for the Cross.

When he is warned not to expect too much from human nature, not to put too much trust in men, not to waste his strength in trying to remove mountains, not to jeopardize his chances on the threshold of manhood in trying to serve a world which, so far from thanking him, will very effectually resent his most disinterested efforts on its behalf ; when he is reminded of these things, the young man who is strong says : 'I acknowledge your facts, such as they are, but they are not facts for me. I, too, may be beaten in the right, but I would rather be that a thousand times over than succeed in the wrong. I do not live on history ; I live to make history. I believe that I was sent into the world new from the fashioning hand of the Creator, and that I have a new man's work to do.'

These are the young men we need to-day. Strong in hope, in position, and in daring ; strong in the strength which they find in their years, and the strength they put into them.

And the Church has a right, society has a

right, the nation has a right to look to young men for a greater and a better future. We who are older have a claim to look to them to confirm our faith in the survival of Christianity as the living force of the future. We need fresh leaders and men who incarnate new forces. We need, in fact, a certain style of man—we never needed him more. We want young men who are inspired by the truth that ideas are realities, and that scepticism about high principles is the most destructive form of ignorance.

¶ 'The world needs nothing more; the great English-speaking race has no need comparable with this need of men who can carry the spirit of vision, which is really the power of achievement, into every phase of our individual and collective life.' [1]

¶ When the Master looked about Him for a symbol of the type of heart that He finds hopeful, and with which He feels at home, He took a little child. And youth, too, stands not far from Him—youth with its big beliefs, its steady and straight-looking eyes, its sunny faith that has no doubts. It's that that keeps this old world of ours young. Don't be disheartened by old fogies chattering doleful criticisms. You be up and at what God has given you to see and do. And may He in His mercy bless you all your valiant days.[2]

Worldliness

1 John ii. 15.—'Love not the world.'

1. This is a strange injunction to come from the aged Apostle, for on another page of another book he tells us that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' It is quite evident, then, that the term 'world' has many and varied usages, and that John is not hostile in his attitude to all of them. For example, he cannot be speaking of the wondrous world of Nature, for this is indeed the living garment of God. Every inch of it bears the impress of His finger and every flower speaks of His love. By his love for Nature Wordsworth was led into the Holy Presence of that Spirit whose realization and worship is religion. Surely, also, John cannot be speaking of the world of art, literature, and music, for it enriches the soul, and adds enlarged interest to our passing days. Nor can the Apostle be thinking of the world of honest toil, 'the daily round, the common task,' for it is the glory of the gospel that it sanctifies the common ways and makes man's labour blessed. Then there is the world of mankind, and we know that John loved it even as did his great Master, and so must we. Thus, by this method of exhaustion, we are brought to see that the world, as John uses the term, is meant to signify an ethical conception rather than a material habitation. The world is a state and not a place; it is a spirit and not a location. As Bishop Burnett used to say, 'The world is humanity organized apart from God.' This is the conception of the word 'world' which Professor Brooke has in mind when, in his commentary, he says that it applies 'to humanity as estranged from God or regardless of God, or to all that is opposed to the Christian view. Such love for the present and finite, either as a whole or in its several parts, excludes the possibility of the higher love of God and of man as brethren in Christ.'

In so far as the physical world is concerned, the New Testament was written around thoughts of it which no longer occupy the foreground of our minds. To them, this world was but the lower storey to a vaster realm which was heaven, and it was thought that Christ would speedily come back to judge the quick and the dead. 'Christianity,' says Bruce Barton, 'was launched as a short-time religion. Its first preachers were men who believed that the world was coming very promptly to an end; that it would be liquidated by God as a failure within their own lifetime.' This belief was the primary cause of what our age contemptuously calls 'other-worldliness.' For be it remembered that the Christian at his best has ever viewed this life as a pilgrimage, and himself as a pilgrim on the way.

¶ 'From the time of the first martyrs to our own day,' says Dean Inge, 'the Christian has always felt that this world is not his home; his eyes have been fixed upon the curtain which hangs between us and the beyond through which, as he believed, streamed forth broken gleams of a purer light than ever poured from the sun. In all the changes and chances of this mortal life he has looked for "the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."'

Let us think of the framework of John's life when he wrote these words, 'Love not the world.' The Roman Empire was then at the zenith of her glory. With the power of her material strength

[1] Lyman Abbott. [2] A. J. Gossip.

and extensive prowess had been blended the enrichments of Greek art and literature. Indeed, for magnificence, pomp, luxury, and power Rome had no equal. It was at Ephesus that John lived, Ephesus wherein Greek and Roman vice mingled with oriental debauchery, and there is little doubt that he believed that this world would come to a speedy end, 'for the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' It was not a question of winning the world for Christ, but of winning as many as possible out of the world before the judgment of God. 'Love not the world.'

2. We do not despair of the world to-day. Indeed, the vast majority of healthy human beings are strongly imbued with the conviction that the world can be improved, and not only so, but that it is our duty so to try. This conviction is the dynamic of social unrest at its best. The Christian ideal in these matters has swung right round from any pious expression of other-worldliness. It means being real and active citizens in this world and not merely passengers to the next. It does not require that every one be a theologian or a preacher or an ascetic, but something sturdier and more wholesome and robust, for it calls every one who names the name of Christ to do his bit in this world for the Kingdom that is invisible and eternal, for love of its King and Lord.

It is quite clear, then, that we must interpret the text as a warning, not against the material world, but against a worldly spirit. Men are worldly when their supreme delights are all gross, when they have no lofty ideals, no dreams of the Eternal, no visions of the Everlasting. Worldliness is a drab state of soul and a sordid outlook on life.

Ah, what a web
Of grey inconsequential-seeming threads!
The modish thoughts, the meat and money
thoughts—
In webs, in webs, in iron curtains proof
Against whatever fires of poesy
Burn in white aspirations from our lives,
They hang between us and your inner
eyes,
Those better eyes, the pure eyes of the
soul.
Lift up the curtain: for an hour lift up
The veil that holds you prisoners in this world
Of coins and wines and motor-horns, this world
Of figures and of men who trust in facts
This pitiable, hypocritic world
Where men with blinkered eyes and hobbled
feet
Grope down a narrow gorge and call it life.[1]

Worldliness is not a deliberate transgression of the Law, it is not the intentional violation of the Commandments; but it is a view-point about life in general which shapes men's motives and colours all they do. Worldliness is a philosophy of life expressed in anything which hinders man's companionship with God.

3. St John gives three reasons why we should not love the world. (1) The first is because such love rules out love of God. 'If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.' There are two claimants for our affection, the world and the Father, and 'no man can serve two masters,' the heart is too small to hold both loves. Nor can we refuse both. Even if we love neither God nor our neighbour, we must love ourselves, and if we love ourselves alone, we are of the world. By the very necessities of our nature we are compelled to have some centre of affection. So let men consider well their choice. If their affections are centred on things above, on God, then love is crowned and life is glorified. But if the world wins their affection, then disappointment, if not degradation, will dog their footsteps to the grave.

(2) The second reason why we should not love the world is because 'the world passeth away.' Should we mate the eternal with the temporal, the mortal with the immortal:

Passing away, saith my soul, passing away
With its burden of fear and hope, of labour
and play.
Hearken what the past doth witness and say,
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.

¶ Man has always been a pilgrim on the earth, and his efforts to dig himself in have not been very successful. 'Paganism in its loneliness coined the phrase, "Mother earth," but

[1] Herman Hagedorn.

humanity has found little comfort in the use of it,' says Mr P. C. Ainsworth.

(3) The third reason St John gives why we should not love the world is because the lust thereof passeth away. We sometimes sing:

Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

The philosophy is better than the poetry. The worldling's pleasure is both fading and fleeting.

¶ Madame Récamier reigned by her loveliness in youth, but one day she was dethroned. 'From the day when I saw that the little Savoyards no longer turned to look at me in the street, I understood that it was all over.'

'Love not the world.' But just what does that mean to us? The world suggests different things to different people. Probably if we were to make out a list of the things we considered worldly, we should disagree upon many of them. Yet whilst we might not be able to define worldliness in detail to each other's satisfaction, we all know well what it is and how it works. Worldliness is this—the love of the baser things of life, cultivated and stressed, until they lead to enmity with God, and contamination of soul. It may be pampered comfort and luxurious indulgence, which are ever the quest of the pagan heart. It may be obsession in sport to the utter neglect of the better things, which is but the revealing of a shallow soul. It may be vulgar mammon worship, or the cold philosophy of material well-being, or the sordid habits of the degenerate. 'The world,' is materialism impinging on the soul and dulling the conscience to the call of God. Whatever keeps us from our best, whatever lifts its head to defy the sanctions of Christ, that is the world, and that we must vanquish for the love of God and the salvation of our souls.

Faith looks to the End

1 John iii. 2.—'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

THE words come upon us with a shock of surprise—the strangeness of an unexpected paradox. Here is St John who has seen, if any man has seen, the tragedy of mortal things, the weakness, the failure, the untrustworthiness of men; who has watched Divine Love being rejected and crucified; to whose penetrating gaze, as he looks out at sin and the penalties and consequences of sin, the whole world 'lieth in wickedness.' And yet, in spite of all this, he has not lost his belief in what men are, in what they are to become. Something has saved him from the fate of the cynic or the pessimist. 'What a piece of work is a man!' cried Hamlet in his famous argument; 'how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?' St John reverses all the emphasis and goes much further. To him this quintessence of dust bears the likeness of the sons of God. After all that has happened he can still believe in the unquenchable divinity in man. It is a supreme act of faith—faith in God, faith in man, faith in the ultimate power of goodness. 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

1. It is only the power of faith that can carry us safely through the dark and troubled days in which we live—that can keep our spirits free from gloom and fear, and equip us for the work we have to do. It is so even with the ordinary trials and efforts of life. No book says such astonishing things as the New Testament about the power of faith. Faith can remove mountains. All things are possible to him that believeth. Is not this true of our everyday experience? When the will is braced the difficulty vanishes. The man succeeds because he thinks he can; he fails because he believes that he will. To him that believeth all things are possible.

But even more than this, it is faith which gives all the colour and atmosphere and horizon to our higher life. There are three things in the human career of our Lord which stand out conspicuously on the record—His faith in God, His faith in man, His faith in the ultimate triumph of His cause. The intense, unfaltering faith of Jesus in the Father is not only a supreme example for us when things happen to try us and our faith to the uttermost as the years go

by, but has also an evidential value all its own; for, though some men have questioned the claims which a Christian makes for his Lord, none can doubt that His eyes have looked more deeply than any others into the mysteries of the eternal world. And just as strong and pure as His faith in God was His faith in man. We did our best to destroy His faith in us, but we did not succeed. He deemed us worthy of His death upon the Cross. And as He believed in God and man, so He believed, against all appearances, in the final victory of His cause. He knew that whatever men might do they could not battle or prevent the ultimate triumph of righteousness and love. Nothing but a faith which possessed the strength of the great mountains and the tranquillity of the great deeps could have faced such terrible odds and met so many rebuffs and disappointments, and yet have remained so certain of itself.

¶ As His days on earth neared their close, how little result He saw for all His labours! In teaching and in healing and in limitless love, He had given Himself to the uttermost, and only a few had followed. The majority were indifferent, and the civil and ecclesiastical powers were preparing a Cross. But He never cast away His confidence; never washed His hands of the whole human race. No, quietly He committed His spirit into the Father's hands, confident that if He were lifted up, He would, in that Father's own time, draw all men unto Him. Surely, as Dr Maltby puts it, 'there is at least far more reason to mistrust our own blindness than to mistrust His certainty.'

2. We are apt to think that there never were greater trials to faith than those which we ourselves have to undergo. 'We are living in dreadful times,' one man will say. 'Christianity is bankrupt,' cries another. 'Why does God allow this war?' asks a third. 'The whole world seems given up to evil and misery,' says a fourth. It is quite possible, with St John, to reverse all the emphasis of these sayings. 'The whole world lieth in wickedness' is precisely what he thought; yet he adds, quietly enough, 'Now are we the sons of God.' That this is one of the great days in the world's history; that instead of Christianity being bankrupt, the war—as far as some nations are concerned—is directly due to the Christian love of freedom and independence and the sanctity of the plighted word; that if the powers of evil are revealed in what we see, so, too, are the much stronger powers of goodness—all these are equally legitimate points of view.

The fact is that all periods in the history of men, including the so-called ages of faith, have been equally difficult for belief. Faith in God is not meant to be an easy thing. We are meant to struggle for our faith, to hold it as a fortress against the enemy. Rightly looked at, it is often much harder to believe in God in times of peace than in times of war. It is rather to strenuous times, such as that out of which the Church itself was born, that faith generally belongs. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writing in such times, draws up his great catalogue of men and women who have lived and conquered by the power of faith. What faith did for that long line of splendid figures, amid their awful trials and sufferings, was to enable them to keep alive and to hand on to others the hope and promise of better and happier days, which they themselves were never destined to behold. And the lesson which is drawn from this great cloud of witnesses is not merely that faith should not falter when it is put to the test, nor that the Church has not necessarily failed because evil passions are manifest in the world, but that God has 'provided some better thing for us' and that our duty is 'to run with patience the race that is set before us.'

What faith tells us, then, is this: that, if only we are convinced as to the righteousness of the cause, whether it be national or personal, for which we have to contend, we need not trouble any more about its victory or defeat. It is impossible for a good cause ever to be defeated. It is impossible for a war which begins with treachery, and a broken pledge, and a defiance of the elementary rules of justice and mercy, to end in anything but disaster to those who begin it.

¶ 'Lies, bad faith, treachery, brute force—such weapons may serve a bully well enough in the despicable work of crushing weak and helpless nations, but they are sorry foundations on which to build a New Order. Certain it is that against the forces of freedom—armed, alert, and strong in faith—they shall never prevail!'[1]

3. The conclusion of the writer to the Hebrews,

[1] Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, 440.

as he studies the storied past, as he goes over again in memory the great things that men have done and the great things that they have tried to do, is that what they most need is patience. 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us!' Patience sounds a dull virtue, and it is not very popular in these hurrying days; yet in some ways it is still characteristic of Northern peoples. We are supposed, as a nation, to possess a certain dogged tenacity which enables us to carry through a given piece of work to a decisive end. And patience not only helps us to go on to the end calm and determined and free from panic, whatever may happen about us, and however far away the end may be, but also brings us to a point from which, as we look back, we see the past transfigured. Patience means the solution of our doubts, the explanation of our problems. In your own life, it may be, either before this war or during it, you have been called to bear some great trial, loss, or sacrifice, and for a time it seemed to overshadow your days with questioning and disillusion, and even with doubts of God; yet, if you were true to yourself and did not hastily reject the Divine discipline, you found in the end that under that shadow God had drawn even nearer to you than before. So it is, in many ways, with the vaster crises of a nation's life. We suffer incalculable trial and loss; we see blood poured out like water; we watch the retreat where we hoped for the advance; we find weakness where we expected strength; things move so slowly to the hope that is ardent and impatient; and we are all too ready to clamour for some sudden and dramatic development. It is not unlike the ups and downs of our ordinary life; and not unlike, too, should be the power of faith—the faith that looks, without faltering, to the end. It may be that not till many years hence will come the full explanation of these distracted days. It may be that our children in the sunshine will understand what we have been struggling for darkly in the mists; and a new brotherhood of nations will be the justification of our labour and the reward of our sufferings. 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

The Unmeasured Sequence

1 John iii. 2, 3.—'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.'

Let us consider (1) the fact that is asserted here—'now are we the sons of God'; (2) the unmeasured sequence that is opened—'it doth not yet appear what we shall be'; and (3) the urgent motive that is suggested—'every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.'

1. First, there is the great possibility that becomes a glad fact. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God.' The love of God has made possible this gift and dignity of sonship, and the possibility is claimed by St John as a glorious fact for himself and for all who with him have believed. It is possible to use the Apostle's phrases without his meaning, and it is well for us to be clear what John means when he speaks of 'the sons of God.' The great fact of the universal Divine Fatherhood we accept and affirm with all its inferences, and, of course, the greatest inference of all is that all men are His children. 'It is he that hath made us.' It is He that hath loved us, loved all His children with a love that cares for all, and yearns for response from each. Universal sonship, because universal Fatherhood, is the doctrine of the New Testament.

But it is clear that John is speaking here of something quite other than a mere corollary from the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God, and in his so specialized meaning he has the mind of Christ. The prodigal in the far hunger-bitten land is still his father's son; there is nothing that can ever make him anything else; but in the only sense that Jesus cared about, he only possessed his father when his father possessed him, when he awoke to his guilt, and came home with repentant self-committal. You strip two of the greatest words in our Christian speech, and leave them dead and dry when you take moral and spiritual content out of fatherhood and sonship. In certain words in the prologue of St John's Gospel we are at the heart of the matter. 'As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God; even to them that believe on His name which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will

of man, but of God.' Here is the sonship, the call to which, the gladness over which, rings through the Evangel.

Have we entered into this new, direct spiritual relationship? Have we so received Christ, and, receiving Him, felt the power of God stirring in the inwardness of our being, drawing us into spiritual fellowship and moral sympathy and activity with the Father? God hath shown forth His love unto this end. The beginning of all things in religion is not in anything that we do, or anything that we give, but in something that we receive, even the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a matter of promise and experience that to respond to Christ is to have life begotten in the soul by the Spirit of God, to come into a great emancipation and enlargement of capacity, to have affections, desires, and feelings changed, to find freedom in a surrendered will and delight in obedience to the Divine will, to have life brought into harmony with the universe of God, and to move with the spontaneity of second nature among the things of the spiritual Kingdom.

2. The second thing is that the glad fact opens into a new possibility. 'Now are we the sons of God.' That is the initial miracle. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' The fact of sonship is a fact with an unmeasured sequence.

The key-word which unlocks most of the secret chambers of the universe for our day is the word 'Evolution.' Man has come a long journey; how far we know in part, and very wonderful is the story. He has climbed, and his painful way upward has been mapped and his footsteps tracked from the slime. The man of science is our teacher concerning the distance that way, and we sit at his feet to learn.

A fire-mist and a planet,
  A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
  And caves where cave-men dwell.

Then a sense of law and beauty,
  And a face turned from the clod,
Some call it Evolution,
  And others call it God.

But who measures the distance onward? Plainly we are unfinished creatures. We have yet to fulfil ourselves. There are capacities for truth and beauty still unworked, and beneath the fugitive interests and expediencies of life are deathless deeps for ever asserting themselves in cravings and longings. Hear St Paul, a very daring evolutionist, who spake beforehand of a subjected creation yet to be delivered, groaning and travailing even as we ourselves—'waiting,' 'waiting.' The man of science says of the backward story, 'life is hid,' for go he ever so far, at last he comes to the flaming sword which still guards the secret of the origin of life. But forward the mystery is a mystery of light and not of darkness. 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' So also says St John: 'we shall be like him.'

¶ Keats called the world, 'the vale of soul-making.' And Goethe, the supreme figure in the German literary world, corroborated that conception: 'It would have been for God a poor occupation to compose this heavy world out of simple elements, and to keep it rolling in the sunbeams from year to year, if He had not the plan of founding a nursery for a world of spirits upon this material basis.'

No, God has not finished with us. He has not finished with us here, and beyond the broken arc there is the perfect sphere, 'Man has for ever.'

The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
  Our times are in His hand
  Who saith 'A whole I planned,
'Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor
    be afraid!'

If to-day's struggle be the cradle of to-morrow's strength, if the good impulse of to-day be the mother of to-morrow's settled habit, if the timid, reluctant self of to-day be prophecy of the bolder, larger self of to-morrow, what is to be the climax of this progressive mastery over the secrets of living through the long marches of eternity? 'We know not what we shall be.'

3. It remains to speak of the power of the unmeasured sequence. This sublime hope supplies a motive. 'Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself.' Thus we are brought to level earth from the splendours of the far vision. It is Dr Maclaren who says of this: 'Here is the most mystical teacher of

the New Testament insisting on plain morality as vehemently as his friend James could have done.' This so blessed hope must spell character. 'Seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.' The hope of being like Christ must stir us to self-surrender and self-cleansing. 'Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.'

¶ The story is told that a lady dressed in simple black visited a home somewhere near Braemar, and entered into friendly talk with the woman—a widow recently bereaved—who lived there. After many kind and womanly words the stranger left. Soon afterwards the neighbours gathered in with eager faces. 'You had the Queen!' said they. 'What!' said she. 'The Queen!' said they. 'It was the Queen who visited you just now.' And the story goes that the woman immediately went back into her home murmuring to herself, 'The Queen, the Queen,' and, lifting the chair on which her royal visitor had sat, she raised it from the floor and gave it a place out of the traffic of her little home, saying, 'The Queen sat on it, and while I live none shall ever sit upon it except her, if she should care to come again.'

This great word of the Apostle brings a wind from the high places of God and Eternity to cleanse and freshen into health our common life. Do you remember Shelley's cry to the west wind that swept his island home? He felt there was life in it, and perhaps life for him; he saw how it sent the swift clouds before it, tipped the sea-waves with silver, lifted even the dead leaves into semblance of life, and he longed to share the impulse of its strength.

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and
proud.

What he needed was not the wild west wind, but the Spirit of God to sweep over his wondrous faculties; and, wizard of song as he was, what mightier music the world might have had! And what we need also to touch our powers to finer endeavours, and our lives to nobler issues, is the free play upon our spirits of the wind from the hills of God; 'the powers of the world to come.'

The Psychology of Hate

1 John iii. 15.—'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.'

1. WHO does not know something of the growth of personal hostility? Often it takes the most puerile form. Some one does us a wrong, frequently of a very slight nature, sometimes entirely imaginary, and that starts to colour all our judgments of that person. It is enough for any one to disagree with some of our ideas, and we picture his whole mentality as bordering upon imbecility; enough for some person to differ from us on a point of policy, and we believe that he is spending his strength in thwarting our plans. We suspect such persons of hating us, and we find ourselves, first in our thoughts, and then openly, indulging a hatred which slanders their character and imputes evil motives. We cannot think of them without a hot feeling coming over us. If we are not careful we find ourselves wishing them ill, perhaps contemplating the fact with satisfaction that they cannot live for ever, then wishing that they were dead. The steps which lead more active natures straight on to murder are quite obvious in ourselves.

2. Hatred not only leads to murder, but it is murder. That is a very strong statement; but it is not mere picturesque hyperbole. It is supported in principle by what our Lord Himself taught in the Sermon on the Mount, where, recalling that the ancient command was not to kill, He exhorted us never to give way to anger because this was sufficient to bring us in danger of the eternal fire. But we must find the justification of that statement in psychology, and we must clear away all objection to it. It would be argued that surely it is not so bad to wish a man ill as actually to carry it out; that it is possible to hate people in only a slight way without wishing to carry it so far as murder. But murder is the only real satisfaction of the feeling; that is what has to be recognized.

We can see this actually working out in

history. It is very incomprehensible to some how the most gentle-mannered and meek-minded people can be so bloody-minded in time of war; but there is nothing really inexplicable in that, if it is an outburst of all the accumulated hate that has been cherished but never expressed. There is no feeling we have within which can be dissipated until it has found expression in one form or another; and there is little doubt that these periodic outbreaks of blood mania are due to long-repressed hates. We see the most awful example of the real effect of hate in the murder of the world's Redeemer. That was not an accidental end; it was inevitable that in a world like ours Christ should be put to death, because Christ presents a satisfying object to our hate, because He is Love struggling with its deadly perversion. There has never been a single hateful thought we have had which has not gone to swell the reservoir which must one day break down its banks and sweep all before it; and this hate never finds its satisfaction until it nails Christ in derision to the Cross.

Hate is not only homicide; it is suicide. People little know how bad hate is for their bodies. Those who are accustomed to analyse their feelings will know how under the influence of hate the physical organs are disturbed. Many of our physical ills may be due ultimately, not only to mental, but to moral states. But it has a worse effect in the darkening of the soul. When a man hates we know how blindly he will act, how no consequences are considered, how his reason is withdrawn, how he can see nothing but his black feelings. But the man who allows himself to hate has put out the light within him; all understanding of himself and of the world is hidden from him; he does not perceive the way in which he is walking or the inevitable end of his course. He has not eternal life in him; that is, he destroys in himself the very principle of existence, which is the love of God.

¶ 'Hates the man anything he would not kill?' asks Shylock in the trial scene in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, and there is hardly another page in literature where we have so powerful a picture of the darkened soul. It was his own soul that Shylock's hate was killing. The Jewish philosopher Philo says that it was not merely his brother that Cain slew: it was himself.

3. Think what this evil is doing to the world to-day! The expenditure of hate upon any human being is bound to beget a reaction; the expenditure of hate upon any corporate body of men is almost certain to get a return in compound interest. Every conquest leaves behind the seeds of rebellion, and the rebellion will go farther than the evil of the conquest. Political assassinations inflict punishment upon people beyond their desert, and then wholesale reprisals are adopted as a policy, to which there are intensified replies, and so the system mounts to madness. On the world scale it has a more awful significance. The continent of Europe has more hate concentrated to the square mile than ever before. Wars do not get worse only because of the numbers involved and the terrible nature of the destructive weapons, but because hatred grows by compound interest.

¶ A Buddhist legend records that a certain prince, whose parents had been driven into exile and finally hunted to death, came in the course of events into the employ of the king who had murdered them, and was chosen to serve him as personal attendant. One day, after hunting, the tired king fell asleep with his head in the lap of the prince. The latter drew his sword to avenge his parents, when the parting words of his murdered father rang in his ears: 'Not by hatred is hatred appeased. Hatred is appeased only by not-hatred.' The prince stayed his hand and sheathed his sword; but when the king awoke he again brandished his sword over the latter's prostrate form, at the same time disclosing his own identity. As the king begged for his life, the prince said without bitterness or ill-will, 'How can I grant you life, O king, since my life is endangered by you? It is you, O king, who must grant me my life.' 'Then,' said the king, 'grant me my life, and I will grant you your life.' When asked the interpretation of his father's dying words, the prince said: 'You have killed my father and mother, O king. If I should deprive you of life then your partisans would deprive me of life; my partisans again would deprive those of life. Thus by hatred, hatred would not be appeased. But now, O king, you have granted me my life, and I have granted you your life, thus by not-hatred has hatred been appeased.'

The cure of hate is to be found in the Cross, because it allows the hate of man to mount up against itself and refuses to return hate again,

but loves instead. When we really see in a moment of faith what the Cross means we see that it is this that our hate has done. No ill thing we have ever wished or done has ceased to work out its evil until it has spent itself upon the heart of Christ. There the hate of man has been able to gather itself together and perpetrate the worst deed imaginable; slay the innocent Lamb of God. And God was willing for this, because He knew that nothing else would ever cure man's hate; there was no hope unless it could find a perfect expression which then would have exhausted itself; and it must be secured that this dreadful act should generate no returning hate, but be swallowed up in love. At that the soul of man awakes to itself; the sting of hate is drawn, and there is now room for the inpouring of love.

Now can come repentance, as there so often does when hate has done its worst. If some of us could be allowed to see our evil wishes realized, we should never wish any one evil again; it is because we so rarely see that, that we do not see the real meaning of our evil desires, and therefore miss the incentive to repentance. But in this deed, the sum of all ill deeds done in the world, we get every inducement to repent, because we are faced not only with the awful stillness of the death we have compassed, but the eyes open to look upon us again with even greater love. Then come cleansing tears of sorrow, the breaking of every evil desire, for it has not succeeded and it never can succeed; we have done our worst and it has utterly failed. Then we see how futile all hate is; it is not only revealed for what it is, but it is shown to be useless. And when we find we are still loved by the One we tried to destroy, we are utterly humbled; our pride which turned love to hate is for ever broken, and love comes to life within us: love to Him who first loved us; love to all men for His sake.

Learning what Love Means

1 John iii. 16.—'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

Of the whole orthodox scheme of teaching 'Mark Rutherford' far too sweepingly asserts that it 'was never of the slightest service to me in repressing one solitary evil inclination . . . nor when I became a minister did I find it sufficiently powerful to mend the most trifling fault.'

Contrast with that this utterance of John's in which he declares that the teaching of the Cross bore so directly on his life as in one relation to change for him the whole colour of existence. His words run: 'It was in this way that I came to know what love means, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.' Our translators, seeking to improve upon the Apostle (which is always dangerous) and to bring this verse into harmony with the ninth verse of the next chapter, have made it read: 'the love *of God*,' but any one who studies the passage will see that what was first in John's mind at this point was not 'the love of God' but the love of a man to his neighbour. This is his persistent refrain, and it is in this context that he introduces his assertion that at the Cross he came to know what this thing called love really means and what his duty was in regard to it.

It scarcely needs to be said that the translator's addition (though it is an addition) is gloriously true, for at the Cross, John and an innumerable company with him have come to know the love of God. This is very great, yet, for the moment, it was not first in John's intention, for he declares that the Cross helped him to realize the extent and the binding obligation of love to one's neighbour. In every noblest human affection three qualities at least are observable: there is an *instinct of discernment*, for love discovers in its object graces and attractions which the mere spectator fails to see: there is a *sheltering instinct*, which is the spirit of chivalry: and there is an *instinct of sacrifice*; and these are all triumphantly exhibited in the Cross, where John learned his lesson.

1. It has passed into a proverb that love is blind. Shakespeare smilingly depicts the queen of the fairies as enamoured of Bottom, the weaver, in spite of his ass's head. It is delightfully entertaining to watch her lavishing caresses and endearments on the grotesque monstrosity; yet few of us can afford merely to smile, since every one at some time has profited by this queer infatuation of love, which overlooks faults and discovers beauties and nobilities unguessed

at by others. If, in one sense, love is blind, it is at least as true to say that love alone can see.

The gospel story is rich in instances. To His friends Jesus gave the rule that they should 'love their enemies and do them good, despairing of no man,' and His practice matched the precept. In scandalous women, whose existence was an affront to a whole community, His eyes discerned something which might make them God's ladies. In John's account of the gathering in the Upper Room, on the night of the Betrayal, there is one detail which ought to strike us as inimitably moving, for there we read that Jesus 'gave the sop to Judas.' Now the sop was and still is the mark of distinguishing honour for the most favoured guest. Treachery and murder had invaded Judas's heart, but the nobler affections which had drawn him into that company, were not yet wholly extirpated; and Jesus, whose eyes were not obscured as ours are by resentment or scorn or despair, looked to that nobler part, and in His act He declared to Judas that honour and favour still were his for the taking. He saw because He loved. In talking of the Passion, Paul three times over in one brief section strikes on this note of amazement and unlikelihood; 'we were without strength,' he says; 'we were yet sinners,' 'we were enemies,' and yet He gave His life for us, discerning behind all the surface appearances something that was worth redeeming.

That taught me, says John, what love to man means and what it ought to be—how it bears all things, and hopes all things, and endures all things, and how it never fails. Love looks on men bigly and kindly as Jesus did, without cynicism or despair, recognizing everywhere traces of the image of God.

¶ Sir Walter Scott tells us that all through his life he returned again and again, with the old avidity for it unimpaired, to a re-reading of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. And this, he explains, because it 'contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.' When something he had done or said had hurt his self-respect, or when other people seemed to have grown small and petty and exasperating, when for some reason or other his genial nature felt fretted and raw, was inclined to flame up into a hot blaze of irritation, he would take down the well-thumbed book again and, as he read, would feel his mind becoming mellower and his old faith in human nature flooding back, till once more he was sure as ever that with all his faults and failings, man is a lovable being worthy of the best that we can give. But nobody does that for us like Jesus Christ, makes us so look up to our fellows, or feel so proud to be a man.[1]

2. But in human love there is also a sheltering instinct, which impels a man to thrust himself between the loved one and the dangers which threaten, and to seek that any burden should come on him rather than on her whom he puts first. The wider love which we call philanthropy —the love of man as man, in which God supremely shares, for Paul speaks boldly of 'the philanthropy of God,' in the same way sends men out to be the helpers and defenders of the weak. This spirit extends even beyond humanity. It is told of Louis Stevenson on holiday at Pitlochry that he flung himself in to defend a dog from the savage maltreatment of its master. 'It is not your dog,' snarled the offender. 'No, but it is God's dog, and He has sent me here to protect it.' On manifold levels this spirit of chivalry or championship appears, and indeed it can never be wanting where love is found. Certainly there is much in us that fights against it: there is the universal habit of looking to one's own interest and seeking to save one's own skin, from which nothing short of a gross personal outrage or a huge convulsion like the coming of a war may break us free. Every one, as Goethe says, brings fear with him into the world but not reverence (*Furcht* but not *Ehrfurcht*); and reverence, as he conceived it, is more than an awestruck sense of Powers above us; it contains respect for those on our own level, and still more for those downtrodden —the weak and outraged and despised. It is these in particular whom love always seeks to champion, whatever the cost may be.

John declares that he learned the obligation of this at the Cross, though at every part of the gospel story this instinct of championship is exemplified. If a burden had to be borne—specially the burden of others' fault and misdoing—it was the choice of Jesus that this should come on Him and not on them. Even His ministry of healing, as the Evangelists silently suggest, left Him at the end of the day a spent man, needing a time of quiet and retreat; and Matthew hints at the reason when he says, 'He bore our infirmities and shouldered

[1] A. J. Gossip.

our sicknesses.' In His lament over Jerusalem it is an image of shelter that He employs, 'How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!' When the hawk is stooping for its pounce, the mother instinct loudly protests, 'Let the blow be on me and not on them!' In Gethsemane again, as John records the scene, when the rabble of assailants broke in, Jesus came out from the shadow of the trees with the words, 'If ye seek Me let these go away.' And at the Cross He prayed, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'

¶ 'The first word from the Cross,' writes Hubert Simpson, 'wipes out from the record the most awful sin ever committed by man, wipes it out in the very moment of its committal. The supreme Sacrifice stands out in the perfection of beauty and efficacy, costing the life of the Son of God, but bringing tragedy and damnation to no other person.'

And this unbroken chronicle of sheltering love culminates where, as Peter says, 'He bore our sins in his own body to the tree.' There this instinct reached its height, and John confesses that it was there he learned what love from man to man should be.

3. Closely joined to this is the companion instinct of sacrifice, for love is never content to offer what costs nothing. James disdainfully alludes to the people who turn beggars away with a pious hope that somehow they will be 'warmed and fed.' Renan was a most kindly creature, yet he describes himself as sitting through life 'in a padded easy-chair, enjoying the delicious spectacle of the world': that is one way of managing existence, yet it is not love's way. The onlooker, it is said, sees most of the game, but he does not add to the score. But Jesus, for love's sake, struck into life with His bare hands. 'For our sakes he became poor,' says Paul; and again, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' When Montaigne was urged to undertake a public service he agreed 'to take it on his hands but not on his heart and liver,' but Jesus kept no such reserves. Close to the end He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful so that I am like to die,' yet He did not turn aside from His purpose; and on the last night of all He said, 'This is my body, and it is given for you.'

It is worth noticing that the people who earned His admiration most were those who, in the same way, could do a reckless thing—the young ruler who, forgetful of his dignity, came running and falling in the open road at Jesus' feet, the widow who gave her last copper to God and His cause, Mary who did not hoard her oil of spikenard, but broke the flask, and let it all flow out at once. That, in Jesus' view, is always love's plan, for it keeps nothing back; and from Him John learned what love is.

'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' says Paul, and if we have none of this spirit, is it possible that we can really be joined to Him? In His life and in His death we have seen this exhibition of what love is—not merely kind but chivalrous, imagining virtues where as yet they are wholly concealed, giving not gifts only but thought and effort and life itself. So John's conclusion is, 'If he laid down his life for us, we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

¶ Miss Mabel Shaw, of Mbereshi, tells of a visit she paid to a leper settlement some distance from her own mission station. She was about to return home, alone, when news was received that the road along which she was to travel was made perilous by lions. But the journey had to be taken, and when it was seen that she could not be dissuaded from her journey one of the lepers asked to be allowed to accompany her. Miss Shaw knew that so poor and weak a creature could be of little help in time of danger, and after trying in vain to turn him from his purpose, she at length asked him: 'But even if you came, what do you think you could do if I were attacked?' The answer came, with quiet and gentle dignity—'I have a life to give.'

Love

1 John iv. 7–11.—'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.'

THERE have been days when men found it possible to talk about the principle that God

is love, and the consequent duty of loving all men, as a sort of commonplace. But those days have gone by. Intellectually we recognize to-day how difficult it is to believe that the Force which lies behind, and works throughout, the development of the universe is pure and unqualified love. And when we talk to sincere people about the consequent duty of loving all men, we find that to most it presents itself as something that is impracticable. They know —or think they know—what love is. They love some people and not others: that is, they like some, and they dislike others. But the root of their mistake is that they think of love as a matter of emotion or feeling. Now no doubt we cannot directly control our feelings; we like some people and we dislike others—that is a fact. But we can learn to love the people we do not like. That is a large part of Christian duty.

Christian love is deliberate correspondence with the declared purpose and mind of God. The root Christian principle, incomparably the most difficult, and also the most attractive, of Christian dogmas or doctrines, is the doctrine that God is love; which is not an obvious truth by any means, but is the central point of that positive self-disclosure of God which the Bible conveys to us, and the central meaning of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The meaning of the Incarnation is that the real character of the Being who made and rules the world has been for us translated out of that difficult and unintelligible region of abstract things beyond our sight into the intelligible lineaments of a human character which all can understand, the character of Jesus of Nazareth.

'No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.' We cannot fail to note that He continually emphasizes one thing as the supreme and all-essential truth, and it is that God is the Father of all alike, which is what St John expresses in the phrase that God is love.

If the ultimate law of the universe, the law of the very being of God who made the world, is love—if that is creation's final law—then every reasonable person must perceive that he has one summary duty, which is to correspond with the purpose of the world or the summary law of nature. For the ultimate folly is to be out of harmony with the fundamental law of being. Every one knows that. And just as lust or pride puts us out of harmony with the purpose of the world, so exactly in the same sense selfishness, class narrowness, jealousy, malevolence, indifference—these things allowed to become characteristic of our lives—put us utterly out of harmony with God and with His purposes for us.

¶ Wandering among the mountains, Peer Gynt encounters some creatures of modern mythology known in Norway as Trolls. Ibsen uses them as the exponents of absolute selfishness and indifference. The law of their kingdom is explained by the king:

Out yonder, under the shining vault,
Among men the saying goes: 'Man, be thyself.'
At home, here with us, 'mid the tribe of the Trolls,
The saying goes: 'Troll, to thyself be—enough.'

The law of human life is 'Be thyself,' be true to that which God intended when He gave you being. Here in the kingdom of the Trolls it is different: 'To thyself be enough'; heed nothing but your own pleasures and desires and ambitions, live only to gratify self.[1]

1. The first beginning of real deliberate Christian living is steadily to contemplate what God is; and to resolve that our lives are going to be deliberately so lived as to be in harmony with God. Is our thought of heaven and hell? Well, heaven is communion with God; and hell is to be out of fellowship with God; and there is no possibility of evading the conclusion that to suffer a character of selfishness to be built up within us, or in that most expressive phrase of Isaiah, to 'hide myself from mine own flesh'—to let the natural advantages of wealth or position screen us from the sufferings of the average man—that is deliberately to build up a character out of harmony with God. Selfishness or indifference is hell self-made within us. That is the truth; and it is a most momentous moment in our life when we realize it. And on the other hand, the acceptance of the Christian law of love is the realization that we must be in harmony with the law of the universe or the being of God, and the being of God is love.

[1] Trevor H. Davies.

2. Let us go on to emphasize the breadth and universality of this quality of Divine love; because in a sense we all love; we love our friends, our relations, our families; we all have a natural sympathy with our class; there is a sphere within which we respond easily to the demand of those who are about us. But the point is that this sort of natural predilection, natural love, is exclusive, it is narrow; it has natural sympathies and it has natural antipathies, and it has almost indomitable prejudices. There is nothing to choose between class and class in this respect, or between nation and nation; they all have their loves and they have their hatreds, their sympathies, and their suspicions. In Jesus Christ there can be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, because the principle of Christ's dealings with men was to refuse such limitations. The love of God is impartial and universal; there is no single human being whom God created for any other reason than because He loved him, and truly wills his good, and proclaims him redeemable, a possible son of God, made for sonship and communion with Him. The question whether the structure of our civilization is to totter and fall seems to be at bottom the question whether men will return to recognize and seek to obey the law of God, or how many men in our society which calls itself Christian, will seriously do this. If not, as the prophets and our Lord tell us, we must fall under judgment.

¶ Love is the supreme sovereign. Love alone can subdue the world. All those men who dreamed of world empire have failed: the first Emperor of China, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, the Kaiser—all have vanished like a dream. Conquest by the sword is but for the moment; it has no validity whatever.

Love binds society together from within. It is both linchpin and girdle, and Love can never be annihilated.[1]

But of course it is not merely a public question; it is a private question also. St John would have us test ourselves rigidly in the matter; and our sincerity is to be tested not by our abstract assertion of principles but by our manner of dealing with individuals in want, or those whom we do not like, or those who have done us some serious wrong. For observe it is a matter of act or will and not of feeling. Some one has done us a wrong. But do we take pains to understand what God's thought and intention is for him, and what God would have him be? If so, we may have to be severe, but the severity will be utterly purged from the motive of revenge or the desire to see him suffer. It will become simply an expression of the pure goodwill of God.

3. And then, lastly, we are to see the principle of love as it is set before us in Jesus Christ. We see in His life and teaching that love means active service according to our opportunities; that we must eradicate out of the very foundations of our being the idea that we are justified in living to enjoy ourselves. We live for service. Jesus does not guarantee us against suffering, even the extremest suffering. By this we are to mark the reality of our service, that we are ready to suffer. We are learning again to-day, what war is so powerful to teach, that service does mean sacrifice. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But we think wrongly, if we allow ourselves in any way to be tinged with what is a purely pessimistic and not a Christian doctrine, that there is any value in pain for its own sake. If we look at the life of Jesus Christ we will notice the fact that out of the thirty-three years of His mortal life thirty years were passed in what was human happiness. He lived in a happy, well-to-do home amidst friends. There is no note of grave suffering suggested to us with regard to these thirty years.

The pain of Jesus deepening into anguish, deepening into the Cross, came solely out of the double root of obedient service and sympathy. He set Himself to obey without compromise the will of the Father who had sent Him. He set Himself to service—the service of every one of His brethren, and He set Himself to sympathy. He spread out all the broad spaces of His human heart that men might lay their suffering and needs upon it. The suffering that came upon Him came purely, simply, and inevitably out of that obedience and service and sympathy in the world as He found it.

Granted the resolute will of obedience, the resolute self-equipment for service, granted a large-heartedness of sympathy which refuses to be bound by the limits of family or class, then there will be abundant joy in life. Indeed a well

[1] Toyohiko Kagawa.

of fresh-springing joy has been opened, and it will be in the providence of God to settle how much of suffering shall come upon us.

The point from which we began and at which we end is the challenge that Christ offers a man that he should organize his life to co-operate with the wide love of God, and not let it drift. Let us organize our lives, then, on the basis of the mind of God; and we know what God is, as we see Him in the face of Jesus Christ. The mind of God, the mind of Him who made and rules the world, is the mind of love that is universal and without qualifications; and in this and no other way shall all men know that we are children of God and Christ's disciples, if we have love one to another.

The Great Definition

1 John iv. 8.—'God is love.'

THERE is a story told of George Gillespie, the Scottish covenanter, that when the Westminster Assembly were troubled over the question, 'What is God?' they fell to prayer. And during the meeting George Gillespie was asked to lead their devotions. He began his prayer with an invocation something like this: 'O God, who art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in whose being are wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,' etc. When he was done, some one said, 'What better definition of God could we have than Mr Gillespie's opening words, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable: in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth"?' The suggestion was received with acclamation, and the question in the 'Shorter Catechism' now stands answered in the words of Gillespie's prayer.

It is a fine answer and a pretty story. But it omits the best word of all; nay, what of itself would have been enough: 'God is love.'

1. It throws some light on the love of God if we can manage to define love. We come near to doing it justice, as Jesus taught, if we consider all that is involved in parental love at its best. According to our text we find an adequate measure of it in the love which Christ bore to man. If we know how Christ loved, and how His love uttered itself towards the sin and sorrow of the world, we know what love is in God, what are the ends which it pursues towards us, and what are the means which it employs.

(1) Every one seems to know what love means, though no one finds it easy to define it. Its distinctive element is a feeling which is described as affection, tenderness, or devotion. Like other feelings, it urges to action of some sort, and its joy passes into pain if it is prevented from finding practical outlets. The things which it seeks to do or to get done fall into two classes, one of which is marked by the absence of all thoughts of self, while the other involves very strong claims on behalf of the self. On the one hand, love is an impulse to give—to do everything in our power, and at whatever cost, for the true well-being and happiness of those to whom we are linked by the bonds of the heart. On the other hand, it is an impulse to appropriate—to secure in some effective fashion the presence and the responsive affection of those for whom it has learned to care. It is written that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The paradox of love is that it is as imperious in its demand to possess as it is generous in its desire to bestow.

(2) These characteristics of love find their highest expression in the life of the family, which is accordingly used in Scripture as yielding rich symbols of the love of God. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, we see the characteristic marks of love in a worthy form. The love of the father is deep and constant. The impulse of love to give is seen, not merely in yielding the portion of goods which fell to his son, but still more in reopening his heart and home to the returning prodigal. On the other hand, there is a great sorrow when the son departs into the far country, and as great a joy when the lost is restored to the father as if he had been raised from the dead. In short, we may say that if we take human fatherhood at its best—with its desire to possess the affection and live in intimate communion with the children, with its impulse to bestow upon them all that is in its gift, while yet the generosity is checked and guided by the wisdom which knows that severity is often the truest form of kindness—we possess a fairly adequate symbol of the nature and the workings of the love of the Heavenly Father in relation to His earthly children.

(3) But even fatherhood and motherhood at

their best fall short of a full reflection of the Divine love. It is when we look on the character and life of Jesus Christ that we are taught to say without reservation—he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father, hath looked into the heart of the Eternal, and divined the purposes that are rooted in His love.

The love of Christ was a deep and constant tenderness. Its intensity was shown in tears and prayers, in labours and sufferings, and last of all in the death of the Cross. It had the note of constancy—'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' It was also so wide in its sweep that it could be called all-embracing.

The chief end of His ministry was to enrich men with spiritual blessings—to lead them to repentance, to implant in their hearts a childlike trust in God, to give them the sense of forgiven sin, to inspire them to self-denying service, to school them to patience and endurance, and to make them fit and meet for the vision of God and His everlasting kingdom. These were the first things, and in giving them He gave the best. But neither did He make light of the secondary things which the human mind is inclined to reckon as the first. Hunger and weariness, sickness and infirmity, the anxieties of the fearful, the desolation of the bereaved—all made their compelling appeal to His sympathy, and their claim on the extraordinary powers which encircled, and which were at the behest, of the sinless Son of God. He at least touched every form of human sorrow, and did whatsoever a love might do which was utterly self-forgetting as well as holy and wise.

And further, the appropriating instinct of love asserted itself with startling peremptoriness in the mission of Jesus. He claimed the souls of men as in a real sense His peculiar possession. No earthly tie was to be so strong as that which bound them to Him. No sacrifice was too great to be demanded for His sake and the gospel. He asked to be loved more than father or mother, and to be called not only their friend but their Master and Lord.

It is after this manner that we are to think of and to believe in the love of God. The one difference is that limitations which lay around the mission of the Son are absent from the workings of infinite wisdom and almighty power. We are to think of God as taking an interest in each individual soul, like that which Jesus took in Zacchæus, or in the Samaritan woman by the wayside well. We believe also that in God there is Christlike beneficence. His love is all-wise and all-holy, so that it chiefly purposes for us the gospel of salvation from the guilt and power of sin. But it also comes near to us as a gospel of Providence, which embraces all the conditions and events of our lives, regulates them with a design to our highest good, and promises that if we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness all other things will be added unto us. And not less does the love of God assert the imperious claim that we are not our own but His. He would make us His by faith and love, by His spirit shed abroad in our hearts, by the hope which trusts Him for the future, by the obedience which says—Thy will not mine be done in all my labour and sorrow.

2. It is a glorious and comforting gospel that the infinite God is One who loves us with a love which is more than fatherly, which has all the qualities of the love of Christ. But this doctrine of the love of God has its obvious difficulties.

(1) It is an essential part of the doctrine as proclaimed by our Lord that the individual is the object of God's loving care, and it is an old objection that the infinite God cannot be supposed to interest Himself in inconsiderable persons and trivial events. In modern times the difficulty may be thought to have been aggravated by the discovery that the universe is so vast. But it is just because God is so great that He is able to concern Himself with the least. Because He is infinite in knowledge and in power, it is possible for Him at one and the same time to busy Himself with the immeasurably great and with the seemingly insignificant—to bear on His shoulders the government of innumerable worlds, and also to call each of us by name, to strive with us in our sins, to sympathize with us in our sorrows, and to make us the objects of a providential discipline which is suited to our individual needs.

¶ God does not simply organize His creation as a whole; there is no poignant moment in our experience which does not exist for Him as something distinct, separate, and individual. 'No sparrow falls from heaven without His knowledge and concern, and there is no human cry which does not reach His ears.' There is a saying of one of the Indian mystics which comes as near as anything I know to doing

justice to this amazing thought of our Lord's. To grasp its full significance one needs to have lived in the East: then one remembers those windless, sultry nights when the air was vibrant with the shrilling of cicadas and the murmur of countless living things. 'Even the tiny bells on the anklets of an insect are heard of Him!'[1]

(2) Again, the events of history make it hard for us sometimes to believe that God is love. It seems inconsistent with the doctrine of a loving Providence that human history should have been darkened by so many calamities and tragedies, and that the social order should be defaced by so many arrangements which offend our sense of justice and humanity. Especially in a time like this, when the peace of the civilized world is broken by a desolating war, and multitudes of innocent and defenceless people are plunged into indescribable suffering and terrors, does the question arise in the hearts of many, and find utterance on their lips, 'Is there in Heaven a God of love who regulates these earthly affairs?' In truth the world in such a time seems a strange piece of handiwork to have issued from the mind of a loving God.

There are two considerations which at least lighten the difficulty. One is that the wild work is not God's doing, but is due to human madness and wickedness, and the abuse of God's gift of freedom. The other consideration is that God, who sees to the end, knows that the final outcome of human history will be the triumph of all that was true and noble in it, and must have deemed the labours and the suffering a price which even those who paid it would not grudge when they looked back on their sufferings from the glory of the end or of the life to come.

¶ 'A boy who had seen his brother's body broken before his eyes,' wrote a chaplain at the Front in the summer of 1915, after his Brigade had been through an absolute inferno, 'crept back into his dug-out and fixed a little drawing on its wall. He drew a cross and a sunrise, and wrote the simple inscription, "God is love." So he reassured himself, and incidentally his friends who happened to see what he had done. That is the kind of reassurance we need here in defiance of the daily challenge to faith, and, thank God, it is not withheld.'

(3) Still more poignantly do some feel the doubt as to the love of God when they reflect on their individual experiences. They have ceased to have faith in God—at least any living and operative faith—because of the calamities which have befallen them, and which seem to them to be meaningless and even cruel. What can we say to those who have passed through such experiences? We may at least remind them gently of the striking fact that many who believed in the love of God as the greatest certainty in the world clung to their faith through more bitter trials and more awful sufferings than they themselves have been called on to endure. And we may trust their witness that there is an inward experience of God's love that outweighs the worst evils of life, and makes even the worst to work together for our good.

It is possible for most of us to find enough in our experience to warrant us in believing that we have to do with a loving God: and if we make an initial venture of faith, and proceed on the theory that we are embraced in His loving purpose, the theory will be found to stand the test of facts, and our faith will grow to more and more.

[1] E. L. Allen, *Thou Must Venture*, 25.

Casting out Fear

1 John iv. 18.—'Perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.'

Fear is the disease of the age—the universal disease. Neurasthenia, in all its multifarious forms and disguises—scoffed at only by those who know nothing about it—is almost wholly a disease of fear. 'And fear hath torment.' Even in these days any amount of fear is theological fear and the sub-conscious relics of the exaggeration and distortion of sin, and of God's relation to it, in traditional dogma.

¶ Henry Drummond says, 'I remember very well the awful idea of God I got when I was a boy. I was given a book of Watt's hymns which was illustrated, and amongst other illustrations there was one representing God as a great black thunder-cloud, and in the midst of that cloud there was a piercing eye.' That was placed before his young imagination, he says, as God.

Everywhere, all the time, men and women

face fear—fear of others, fear of themselves, fear of change, fear of growing old, fear of disease and poverty, fear of death—and at last many face what the psychiatrists call *phobophobia*, the fear of fear, being afraid of being afraid. And the question is, what to do about it ?

1. The Apostle does not say that reason casts out fear. We think it ought to : but it doesn't. Why ? Because reason is over-rated, as Bergson contended in his *Creative Evolution* : and modern psychology is making doubly certain. We are much more, and much other than reason. Let reason take you as far as it can, in any direction in which it can operate. But there are wide territories where it is completely sterile. Turn your reason on against your fears : and see what happens. In some cases quite a good deal ; in others, something : but in many, nothing at all. Why ? Because most of our fears belong to a region where the writ of the reason does not run. We must tackle fear on its own ground. For reason is the directing force of the will. And modern psychology is teaching us that we have been concentrating too much attention, physically, mentally, and morally, on the will.

So the Apostle does not appeal to the will to cast out fear, nor to the reason. He knows that the source of fear lies neither with the will nor with the reason, but with the emotions, which go deep down into what modern psychology calls the sub-conscious. And neither the will nor the reason has any control over the sub-conscious, where nine-tenths of our total personality and our motives lie. For our total personality is both conscious and sub-conscious. We have little or no control over the vital processes that sustain the beating of the heart and the circulation of the blood and the processes of digestion and assimilation, and metabolism, and so forth. They are taken care of by a part of our intelligence that belongs to the sub-conscious, and that is really a far wider area than the conscious and the volitional and the deliberate.

What the Apostle says in the text is that love casteth out fear. And love belongs to the emotions, rather than to the reason or the will. Love is not a matter of reason ; you can't love to order ; and you can't cease fearing to order. And—as will and reason do not and can not—love does and can command the whole man and can reach right down to the sub-conscious and encompass the whole personality and deal with the most hidden roots of his being, his motives and his fears.

Fear hath torment. If a sudden fright can make your hair stand on end, your heart beat violently, and set all your limbs trembling ; if a sense of shame or confusion in the mind can send the blood flaming to your face, it is too late in the day to question the effect of the mental, or the sub-conscious, on the physical.

There is no better illustration of this than Coué's famous illustration of the plank. Lay a thirty-foot plank, twelve inches wide, on the ground, and almost anybody can walk across it. Lay that same plank across a ravine in the Alps, with a thousand feet of empty space beneath, and hardly one in a thousand would dare to try it. It is the same plank ; we are the same persons ; in one case it is easy ; in the other we summon the resources of our will—but the will is helpless. Why ? In the case of the plank on the ground our will and our imagination are not in conflict ; but in the other, fear rises out of the sub-conscious and swamps the will.

¶ 'It is not much good,' says a very wise Christian psychologist, 'trying to push the mill-wheel of the will round with one's hands when the stream of feeling or imagination is flowing the opposite way.' In fact, your success or your failure depends largely on the kind of mental picture you are making. As this same psychologist puts it, 'To say loudly, "I will," when an inner still small voice adds, "But I don't think I can," is really to hold an imaginative picture of oneself failing ; and fail one assuredly will if that picture be not changed.'[1]

And it is just here that theology, too, has made its mistake : still more it is just here that all purely ethical systems break down—with their moral appeal to the reason and the will. There is only one thing that can save and heal men. And that is why, not ethics, not mere rules of right living, but only a gospel of Love can save the world. It is not by an appeal either to the reason or the will that we can be healed either physically or spiritually, but only by an appeal to the affections.

¶ In the famous story of the dog that saved Verdun, when the dog was shot down a few hundred yards from the last trench its will failed. It was beaten. But it was not at the

[1] E. S. Woods, *Love in Action*, 108.

end of its resources. There was one power left. And only one thing now could give it the motive and the strength to struggle on to help to save France—his master's voice.

2. 'Perfect love casteth out fear.' We may leave the 'perfect' aside for a moment—for obviously the more perfect the greater the effect. Love casteth out fear. And only love. God's love of us, our love of God, our love of others, others' love of us, all love, any love. To try to do it for ourselves, at the summons of our pride and our self-confidence to the will and to the reason to help us, is to court failure—unless we are in perfect health and perfect poise, and even then both will and reason have their breaking point. But love has no breaking point. Love never faileth—not the real thing. Love arms trembling hands and sinking knees, where the will is powerless to give strength.

¶ At a fête in Malmesbury, a mother and her little child of two were standing outside a tent, in which a lion was on exhibition. During a moment of inattention on the mother's part the child crawled under the canvas of the tent. Suddenly the screams of the child attracted the mother's attention and dashing into the tent, she was horrified to see the child being mauled by the lion. She rushed straight at the savage beast and tore her child away from its jaws. Happily help came in time and both mother and child were saved, though both were injured.

Reason will argue: love never does. Will and reason certainly can help. But alone they will not save in the hour of temptation. We know all the arguments—everybody does, but only love will save—loving some one better than ourselves—supremely the love of Christ.

Only love is a physic for the whole man. Only love can reach where fear breeds. All love that is love is specific against fear. The love of the cat that went back into the blazing house to fetch her kittens, and was found afterwards a charred cinder by their side. Any love that is truly love—but supremely the perfect love—the love of God in Christ: for the best of our loving is liable to break down and prove a broken reed, because we can't love enough. We doubt, we fear, we tremble, but we can do it, we can bear it, because God's love in Christ enfolds us. Only love can tackle fear and chain it: for—to say it yet again—love goes where the writ of the reason and of the will does not run. But there is something better than tackling and chaining fear. Perfect love *casteth out fear*.

¶ Studdert Kennedy used to tell that when he first got out to the front line he was terribly frightened—paralysed by fear. He brought his reason to bear and all the force of his will—he was an officer and a chaplain, with special responsibility for a good example. He willed not to fear: but he feared damnably: and disastrously. Until suddenly he realized that Christ was by his side all the time. He was Love-enfolded, and the fear went away and never came back.

The Sacrament of Love

1 John iv. 20.—'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'

'THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' In this great dual saying, cited from the Jewish Law, our Lord evidently assents to the view that the first of all human duties is that of loving God; that of loving man is emphatically subordinated to it. How comes it, then, that the text puts, or seems to put, matters the other way round? This writer tells us that unless we are sincere in our love of one another it is of no use professing to love God; and he enforces his argument by declaring in effect that love of God has to be learned from love of man, and that it is not such a very easy matter to love a being one has never seen; one can only ascend through the experience of human fellowship to the apprehension of a still higher—namely, fellowship with the Divine and eternal. He is unquestionably right, though there comes a point beyond which all analogies break down in the effort to illustrate or explain the relations of the soul with God. Nor is there any discrepancy between his opinion and that of Jesus on the subject. Love of God can never rightly be separated from love of man, however far the one may transcend the other and ought so to do. He who is incapable of the lower love, or poor and shallow in the amount of it he evinces, is *ipso facto* incapable of the higher, or

false and unreal in his assertion of it. 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.' Hate or indifference to the needs of man, cruelty in one's treatment of one's fellows, is quite incompatible with love to God, though, as we know to our shame, it has often been found consistent with a certain degree of religious sentiment.

1. Throughout all the Christian centuries, as well as in the best period of the Old Testament religion, which was the seed soil out of which that of Jesus sprang, the greatest stress has been laid on the gladness, combined with the duty and privilege, of putting love to God before everything else. Every Church exhorts its members to do this. We have been repeatedly warned by persons wise in the things of the Spirit, the great ones of the heavenly kingdom in every generation, not to suffer our affection for the creature to hinder that which is due from us to the Creator. Again and again we read in the lives of great saints that they have had to make their choice between the two kinds of love, and have deliberately forgone the delights of human fellowship rather than allow anything to compete ever so slightly with their all-absorbing loyalty to their Maker. They have held somewhat aloof from their fellow-creatures even when serving them best, have refrained from giving themselves whole-heartedly in any association of soul with soul, have remained more or less detached from all human concerns.

Beware of robbing God by loving the creature; beware of attaching yourself too strongly to any human soul—son or daughter, father or mother, husband or wife, lover or friend—for if you do you will be incapable of scaling the highest heights of fellowship with God. Such are the monitions addressed to us by those austere, lonely spirits who dwell amid the rigours and grandeurs of a religious experience inaccessible to all but a few.

¶ St Bernard of Clairvaux felt himself called to withdraw from all family relationships and to expose his feeble constitution to the severest hardships as a member of a monastic community dwelling in the wilderness far from all other human habitations. He did this, he said, because he loved God and would have no other particular love in his life; henceforth father, mother, and brothers would be to him no more and no less than any other human beings; he would love all mankind with the love of Christ and in no other way. St Bernard's letters are very remarkable compositions and give us a better insight into his character than his theological works. In one of these addressed to a friend he says: 'To love God is to love charity, and therefore it is to labour for charity, to strive to love and be loved for the sake of God, which alone is worthy of our zeal in the service of man.'

2. Contrast with all this the numerous beautiful and touching examples in which history abounds, and not infrequently to be met with in everyday life, of the devotion of one human being to another. Bernard Shaw says that sex love is the most transient of human passions, and perhaps it is, but it can be spiritualized and made lasting with the sublimest results in the elevation of character.

¶ 'Do you know what you are to me?' Elizabeth Barrett writes to Robert Browning. 'We talk of the mild weather doing me good . . . of the sun doing me good. . . . Have you done me no good, do you fancy, in loving me and lifting me up? Has the unaccustomed divine love and tenderness been nothing to me? Think! Mrs Jameson said to *me* the other day . . . that "love was only magnetism." And I say in my heart, that, magnet or no magnet, I have been drawn back into life by your means and for you . . . that I see the dancing mystical lights which are seen through the eyelids . . . and I think of you with an unspeakable gratitude always—always! No other could have done this for me—it was not possible, except by you.'[1]

And surely there can be no two opinions concerning the love of a mother and her offspring. Maternal love has been said, and rightly, to be the most unselfish of human feelings. A mother may be selfish on behalf of her child but seldom to the child himself; she gives, asking for nothing in return, gives herself freely, willingly, ungrudgingly; few children ever know what their mother's love has cost her, for the story can never be fully told. It is wonderful beyond words.

¶ In a quaint and charming town on the east coast of Scotland, I met the toil-worn mother of

[1] *The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*, ii. 130.

a large family. One of her children was an imbecile, who added fearfully to an already heavy burden. To the suggestion that the child might be removed to an institution where he would receive every care and comfort, the broken-hearted mother replied, 'Aye, aye, but I wouldna be there. Thank you, sir, but I'll struggle on a while longer and see what happens.'[1]

We cannot believe that in the sight of God love of this kind can be anything but good and elevating to the soul. Human love is a sacrament introducing us to that which is Divine, and therefore it should be treated as a sacrament, a window through which to view holy and ineffable realities.

3. There are people who would say that they cannot love God, that they know nothing about Him, that to them He is but a name, whereas men and women and little children are real and near and need such love as we have to give. We cannot help loving God if we have ever loved any living thing nobly, unselfishly, and given ourselves in doing it. What we love in one another *is* God, but we must learn to reach through the particular to the universal, through the human to the Divine.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

To Catholic saintship the privilege of beholding what is called the beatific vision has always been held to be one of the greatest tokens of God's favour. One form in which it has been experienced is that of an appearance of the figure of the glorified Christ to the gaze of the devotee. The story of the praying monk to whose astonished and enraptured vision the Christ appeared one day just as he was quitting his cell to go and minister to the sick at the monastery gate, is a familiar one. He hesitated, for he had long hoped and prayed for this great joy which might never be his again. But with a sigh he turned and went, only to find when he came back that the radiant presence was still there. And, looking upon him with kind eyes, the Master said: 'Hadst thou stayed I should have gone.'

[1] W. Erskine Blackburn.

Some people have the sense of God in a greater degree than others. But this particular faculty does not argue superior sanctity on the part of any one; it is no sign of exceptional merit any more than the possession of an ear for music; it is simply a trust given for a specific purpose. Some of the best people in the world have never had it. All they have is a certain peace and satisfaction realized in the service of their kind, with perhaps an added feeling that the love they give and receive is an intimation of the presence of something higher from which it comes. Let us say to all such, we would that you might love God for Himself; that you might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; but you are right in seeking for it in the way you are doing, for assuredly God is there. And we have the authority of Christ for saying this: 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

The Faith that wins Through

1 John v. 4, 5.—'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'

1. Dr. Weymouth translates the fourth verse, 'The victorious principle which has overcome the world is our faith.' That is true in any realm. Nothing is achieved without faith, nothing is impossible with it. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.' Faith has conquered the sea and the air. It has tunnelled the mountains and brought the ends of the earth to our doors. Faith discovered the wireless, with all its modern marvels. 'Impossible,' said Napoleon, 'is not a word in my dictionary.' It is faith which enables any man to say that. In the world of discovery illustrations abound of daring and dauntless faith which has made miracles commonplace. Nowhere is this more clearly seen to-day than in man's mastery over

Nature. But it was not of the natural world that John was thinking when he wrote, 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' It had not then dawned upon men to wrest from Nature her secrets. John was thinking of the world which is hostile to God; the world, with its passions, its lusts, its pride, its selfishness, its sin. He was thinking of a spiritual conflict, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.' This world is conquered by faith in God. Faith in the ultimate triumph of right has led many a man to victory against overwhelming odds.

¶ Some thirty years ago there was a great outcry against the Congo atrocities under the rule of King Leopold. Missionaries, travellers, and commercial agents told harrowing tales of oppression. But there were strongly entrenched vested interests. Go back still a few years to the office of an English shipping firm which did a large carrying trade between England and the Congo. There was a young man named E. D. Morel, whose heart was stirred by the sufferings of helpless victims. He appealed to his employers to take the matter up and decline trade relations with those who profited by ill-gotten gain. But there was too much money in it. So this young clerk, unaided and alone, resolved to attack and overthrow this entrenched wrong. Money was poured out like water to overwhelm him. But it failed, and in the end he triumphed.

2. But while all this is true we have not yet got to the heart of the text. It is worth noting that the word translated victory occurs only here in the New Testament, and this is the only occasion John uses this word 'faith' in his Epistles, nor does it occur at all in the Fourth Gospel. What St John means here is fixed by the context. 'Our faith' is summed up in the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'

John was writing to people among whom a peculiar heresy had begun to creep in—the strange idea that Jesus was not real. He was only a kind of stage figure, a shadow Christ, whose temptations were only a sham fight. Against this he sounded his trumpet call. Jesus is a real person. In Him we genuinely meet with God; in Him God is at work in history.

It is an accepted fact that Jesus is the most inspiring figure in history. But the moment we begin to think of Jesus we must have some thought about Him. And here is the point—the higher our thought of Jesus, the greater is His power over our souls. That is what John is pleading for, that thought of Jesus which can awaken the fullness of our power in such a world as this. This is what John means when he says, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.'

If we are to recover the dynamic power of this belief, we have got to find out what it means. What does it mean for us to say that Jesus is the Son of God? It means that God is like Jesus. The Early Church really meant that, when they thought of Christ as Divine. What does it mean to us in the terms of our ordinary experience, in the attitude we take to the message of Jesus, in the way we deal with other people, in our whole outlook upon life, that God is like Jesus?

(1) For one thing it offers a new outlook upon many of the dark facts of existence. Think of suffering and pain, for instance. How often do people blame God for these, or, if they do not blame Him for them, at least attribute them to Him? But if God is like Jesus, the real test of whether a thing can be rightly attributed to God is the question whether it is a thing which Jesus would have done.

At first sight this seems to deepen the mystery; and some people have unconsciously evolved from it two gods, one of whom is altogether good, and one a kind of devil. That is to make the confusion worse, to deepen the perplexity. It is perfectly true that these things—pain, suffering, distress—happen in a world of which God is the Creator. But surely the true solution of the problem is to be found by remembering that this world is only a world in the making. There are dark things in it because it is yet imperfect. But if Jesus reveals the Will of God, His coming means that God is seeking to redeem the world, to perfect it, and in Jesus is calling us to help Him, as Jesus called out the faith and co-operation of men in fighting evil and overcoming disease. Looking at it thus, a faith awakens which makes for a courageous optimism and puts heart and spirit into us: the faith that, behind and through everything, God works, striving and often baffled, yet victorious. His very love is seen in the fact

that He offers us our part to play in shaping and developing the world, and thereby being ourselves shaped and developed. God's purpose of love is so wonderful that it must involve some experiences that try us to the core. And it must take time to work itself out.

¶ Bishop Wilberforce and Thomas Carlyle were out walking one day and discussing the death of their mutual friend, John Stirling. Carlyle suddenly turned to the Bishop and said: 'Have you a creed?' 'Yes,' replied the Bishop, 'and what is more, the older I grow the firmer that creed becomes beneath my feet. There is only one thing that staggers me.' 'What is it?' asked Carlyle. 'The slow progress which that creed seems to make in the world.' Carlyle remained silent for a little, and then said: 'Ah, but if you have a creed you can afford to wait.'

(2) But this faith is not merely a comfort; it is a challenge. For if God is like Jesus, the message of Jesus about the true way of living, about love and that fellowship and co-operation which is the logic of love, has an authority which is far greater than we often give it.

What if God is like Jesus? What if these principles of His, instead of being impracticable dreams, are the unveiling of the way in which God means the world to work, so that if it does not work in that way it is bound to meet disaster, like an engine defying the rules of mechanics? That is precisely what Christ claims for His message—that love is the law of life. If this faith is ours, the only thing we dare do is to hold on to our ideals, though they create a tension in our souls, between what is and what ought to be, that breaks our peace. It is to hold on and stand fast, and get something done wherever we can, caring for no opposition; and suffering no shallow demonstration of the impossibility of a Christian order of life or industry to stifle our conviction, or keep us from honest thinking, or dry up our prayers. Things are changed by a faith that defies obstacles and laughs at impossibilities, and in no other way. That faith conquers. For, in time, God builds these seeming dreams of ours into the substance of abiding realities. He that overcometh the world is he that believes that Jesus speaks with the insight and authority of God.

(3) And, again, this faith means an invitation to a real contact with God. If God is like Jesus one thing is sure—He is available. For Jesus was available. Who so approachable as He? Two things always happened when people got into the company of Jesus. One was that they became aware that He had entry to their minds—to the secrets of their souls—they could not keep Him out. They felt as some creature of the deep must feel when a searchlight from the upper world for the first time penetrates his comfortable obscurity. And if a man was ready and willing, a second thing happened. Jesus became equally accessible to him; he got right into His mind, into His heart. Ah, but you say, He is now so far away!

Comes faint and far Thy voice
From distant Galilee.
The vision fades 'mid ancient shades:
How can I follow Thee?

But if God is like Jesus, He reaches us, in every breath of Christ's Spirit, in every glance of His eye, in every flash of His mind, in every beat of His heart. Up in the hills, where the rains fall and the springs and the streams so often run to waste, they sometimes build a reservoir to catch the waters, and out of that reservoir they lead a channel down into the valley where, in a factory, they turn the power of it into light and heat. Through that channel, simple and unobtrusive, the factory takes into its heart the power of the everlasting hills. The influence of Jesus is the channel through which we become linked with God. Is not this a challenge as to whether our faith is real and how real it is? For surely all things are possible—all strength in weakness, all grace in temptation—to the man who believes that in Jesus, in every contact with His mind and spirit, he is in touch with the everlasting God. 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way.

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie—what matter?
He is there.

The Day of the Spirit

1 John v. 7.—'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.'

1. We have become accustomed now to the idea of the progressiveness of God's revelation. Let us then think of one God, whose will it is progressively to reveal Himself to man. There is not much He can say at a time, for men are not wise and their knowledge grows from less to more. He must speak to them at sundry times, and in divers manners, and in varying forms and fashions.

Is it too much to suggest that if the one God willed to reveal Himself progressively to men He would do so in the order of the Trinitarian formula, first as a Father, then as a Son, and then as the Holy Ghost? In other words, His first revelation would be of Himself as the Creator, as the Living and Righteous One. Then we would expect that He might reveal Himself in terms of human life. He would show us what human life ought to be if it were in accordance with His will, and, finally, we might expect that He would cause man to understand that He is an immanent Spirit, indwelling all things, co-operating with man in the accomplishment of purposes that are mutually desirable.

This is indeed the method of the Bible. In the first part of it, which we call the Old Testament, the revelation is of God as the Creator. 'In the beginning, God.' That is its first great word as it has come down to us, and slowly, as the centuries pass, more and more content is put into that word. Slowly does God appear to men, not merely as their Creator, but as the Righteous One. With ever-deepening fullness and richness and glory this content is expressed, until the first book, as it closes, leaves men with the word 'Father' trembling upon their lips, though as yet they dare not utter it.

The second part of the Bible, that which we call the New Testament, focuses its attention upon a man—the man Christ Jesus, a veritable man, the most man-like person who has yet lived upon the earth, the kind of man whom all men desire to be, and to whom all men dimly aspire.

This is the second part of the book—the book of the Son, the book of the Living Word.

But the Bible does not end there. It is, indeed, incomplete. Before it closes, it makes clear to us a third manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit. The New Testament speaks of the coming of God's Spirit. The Church is the vehicle of the Spirit, and individual Christians live by the power of the Spirit.

These personages whom we see, as it were, for a few moments in the light of these pages, are men and women who believed themselves to be inspired with a living Spirit, and they are seen going out into the world to capture it for Christ. Then the curtain falls, and the book leaves us believing in the dispensation of the Spirit.

2. It baffles our imagination to try and think where the world would have been to-day without Moses, without the witness of the chosen people. In Moses' heart there was this great passionate belief, that there was but one God, and along with him humanity has marched; and all the best things that have come to the world have come in the track of that great and sublime belief that God is One.

It seems an easy thing to us to think there is but one God, but as a matter of fact it is a very hard thing. The Bible makes it clear how strenuous a task it was to preserve this faith, for the chosen people themselves slipped back over and over again into polytheism. It was the people of the Book who brought that dynamic belief out of the shadows of time, holding it aloft where other nations had failed, and saved it for the world.

And then away down the track of the centuries, after this great truth has been progressively revealed and strenuously fought for, the people are found waiting for another manifestation of the Deity. There is a feeling in their hearts that they want to see Him now in terms of human life, they want to know how life should be lived here on the earth according to His will and design.

The greatest thing that ever happened in history, absolutely the greatest, was the faith that became credible and powerful that there was a Man, who lived upon this earth, making clear to the world, at least, what a man ought to be, and, whatever theories we hold apart from Christ, we never expect to see a greater than He. The book is closed—man, if he

become what we dream and hope, can only approximate to *the* Man, Jesus Christ.

3. Now we have the third phase of the eternal truth about God being manifested to men. These are the days of the Spirit.

Take the books of the philosophers, for instance. The old materialism is dead—one may say that with confidence. The effort to interpret the phenomena of life in terms of mere materialism is wounded as if to the death. There are not many men nowadays who believe that you can explain the higher by the lower, that you can explain the mind and conscience by mere matter and force. This is the day of psychology. It is the mind, the soul, that absorbs the thoughts and interests of men in our time—it is the day of the Spirit.

¶ Mr Bernard Shaw said some time ago that the thought of God the Father had no interest for him; that the thought of the Incarnation did not appeal to him; but he said, 'I do believe with all my heart in the fellowship of the Spirit.' Mr Bernard Shaw, as we know, likes to say things in a way that will shock the conventions, but he is a wise man, and he has a way of uttering the thing that is in the general mind.

There is a sense in which we may say we know enough about God now. We are but tiny children on the edge of the great sea, but the vital question to-day is not the existence or non-existence of God, it is not the character of God. If men worship at all they worship a Father! God is not demonstrable. He will never be found out absolutely. He cannot be weighed and measured, put in a crucible, or reduced to a formula. It is not that the world is wanting. There is a sense in which we may say, with bated breath and great reverence, that it is not in the Person of Christ that the real problem is centred. Men are not arguing so much about Him now.

But what the world is wanting, and for the want of which it is dying, is life lived as it ought to be lived with a God who is a Father; life lived as it ought to be lived with a Lord like Jesus Christ. It is the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ that the world is craving for.

¶ Heine, in a memorable passage, says: 'Ah, my child, while I was yet a little boy, while I yet sat upon my mother's knee, I believed in God the Father, who rules up there in heaven, good and great. When I got bigger, my child, I comprehended yet a great deal more than this, and comprehended, and grew intelligent; and I believe on the Son also, on the beloved Son, who loved us and revealed love to us. Now, when I am grown up, have read much, have travelled much, my heart swells within me, and with my whole heart I believe on the Holy Ghost. The greatest miracles were of His working, and still greater miracles doth He even now work.'

A Gospel of Life

1 John v. 12.—'He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.'

This is one of those perfectly simple statements which are so deceptive. In this limpid statement the writer has given us the concentrated essence of his teaching, and yet there is not a theological phrase in the contrasted sentences: He, hath, the Son, life. In addition, as if he had anticipated modern thought and wistfulness, he fixes our attention on his description of the supreme good—life. He describes an experience and assures us of an effect of this experience—a permanent experience and a permanent effect.

Hath: that is the connecting word. It has proved too simple for two of our leading modern translators, for one has translated it by 'possesseth,' and another by 'findeth.' 'He that hath the Son hath life.' It is quite possible for us to confuse ourselves with such a simplicity, for 'hath' can take a dozen shades of meaning. A man has a father and friend, a face and hands, a house and an office, an influence and a memory and a temper. But we need not confuse ourselves, for we all know what 'hath' means. It is a bit of reality. It states a fact and it promises an effect.

The Son: that is the writer's name for a personality, the Son. We see immediately the effect of this word; it carries with it the suggestion of another, father. If a son is at all like his father, then in some measure he recalls his father, represents his father, expresses his father to us. If the relationship between father and son be at all close, then he recalls and represents and expresses the father to us in a high degree. If God be the Father and the Son be perfect man, then in a recognizable and discernible way the Son recalls and represents and expresses God

to us. So this simple word brings God near to us, puts Him within reach, makes Him real.

Life: that is the word on which makers of definitions have spent their strength in vain. Dr. Flint, the robust writer of *Theism* and *Anti-Theistic Theories*, revises in successive pages the definitions of life attempted by the clearest thinkers, and rejects them all. Perhaps his own solution fails to find acceptance. Life is in the strict sense indefinable, but we know what it means. It means sensitiveness and awareness, energy and activity, it means growth, above all it means possibilities. 'Having the Son' is the experience, 'Life' is the effect of the experience.

We understand something of what the writer says to us. But mark, he repeats it negatively: 'He that hath not the Son, hath not life.' Is that restatement in a negative form merely for the sake of emphasis? No, it is a danger-signal. There are fictitious appearances of life—what looks like life, but is really inanimate.

We read his lucid sentences and feel an intellectual pleasure in the statement. In a moment, by a negative restatement, we are made to feel how searching his simplicity is. He is appealing from the mind to the conscience. There is that which looks *like* life but is dead. We may be tricked. That is the implication.

1. Any real religion must be an experience. 'He that *hath* the Son.' That means something real. It puts in the second place theory, tradition, observances. All these are only means to an end, the scaffolding. The writer is concerned with the building behind the scaffolding.

This is the tremendous thing the writer is saying, that if we have the Son, He has the same kind of actuality for us as an earthly friend or kinsman; His influence upon us is as real as the assertions of conscience which make us miserable or tranquil. Thus a blow is struck at that greatest of all heresies, namely, that you can be a Christian without being affected by it, without personal intercourse with the Unseen, without a living relation with Him who makes God accessible and effective for man. 'No,' the Apostle answers, 'I am writing about actual possession—" he that *hath* the Son."'

¶ Stopford Brooke, long after he had left the Church of England because of his unorthodoxy, recorded in a Christmas booklet his conviction that whenever a hand was stretched into the unseen seeking the hand of Jesus, it would receive an answering handclasp from that Lover of mankind. Orthodox or unorthodox, he experienced Jesus.

2. The effect of this experience is described by the large and alluring word, Life. The essence of that word is the presence of possibilities, the absence of finality. It may lack many things which the dead or the inanimate may have, either temporarily or permanently. It may lack beauty or strength, but it has something more precious. The dead are often more beautiful than the living, but decay, not growth, is their lot. According to the Malagasy proverb, 'A stone is stronger than an egg for it can crush it, but the egg is greater than the stone for it may become a bird.'

We know what life is, physical life, conscious life, mental life, moral life; and spiritual life, too, we can know. Spiritual life may be masked, just as spiritual death may be masked, but, broadly speaking, it is discernible.

It is precisely this endowment of vitality which men seek to-day. There was a time when people wanted most a gospel of mercy; it was their sins which troubled them. Again, they wanted most a gospel of the truth; it was honest thinking which occupied them. Now, they want a gospel of life. It is true in a good sense, as well as in a bad sense, that many to-day are not troubling much about their sins. We are passing, many of us, out of the sphere of problems—we know which way probability points. We are in the sphere of conflict. Can this life be lived is our question? Is there a fountain of moral and spiritual energy available? Can we find a new endowment of inward vitality?

Of course, no period is sharply separated from its predecessors. There are still people who do trouble about their sins. There are still people who do trouble about the truth of the gospel. They cannot accept Jesus until their reason is consciously convinced of the high probability that He is the unique Son of God. But, broadly speaking, what men and women hunger for is life, renewal and increase and expansion of their powers of mind and conscience and spirit. And here is the gospel for them: 'He that hath the Son hath life.' Can we preach it to them? Varying, intermittent, vague as our experience is, can we say to them, with authority born of our experience, we know it. We know the secret

of life given, life renewed, life sustained. And for the whole of our being: spirit, conscience, mind, yes, mind too, was quickened; and body, body too, its power of endurance was renewed.

3. How begin this experience? How enter on possession of it? There are just two utterly important things to remember.

(1) We must desire it, desire it above everything we possess. We have spoken as if all of our generation desired it, but of course that is only true of awakened, striving people. There are plenty who don't want more vitality; their secret desire is for less—they want ease, comfort, security. They don't want to feel more, to think more, to do more, to be made fit for heavier burdens, larger tasks, because feeling and thinking and doing more seem to them to mean disturbance and loss of ease. This is the great untheological sin—evasion of life's fullness, fullness of demand and supply. Christ can do very little for people who remain in this state. But for those who desire life, and desire Him as the source of life, He can do much.

¶ One of the fragments of Catherine of Siena's self-communings has been preserved for us. It runs like this: 'O God, what can we bring to Thine infinite perfection? I myself and my service are all unworthy. But this one thing I do bring to Thine infinite perfection, my infinite desire.'

(2) And secondly, we must act on the supposition that Jesus Christ, the Son, is fully aware of us and the waves of His influence already surround us. We are not required to awaken the sunshine, only to welcome it. Unbar the shutters, throw wide the windows, unclose the doors. Jesus Christ offers Himself in His wholeness as Sacrifice and Saviour and Succour. There is some One to whom to respond. Messages are pouring forth from Him. We have only to tune our receiving apparatus to be able to receive them.

¶ A friend of mine went to live in a rather remote rural district. He bought an old farmhouse and remodelled it, placing in every room electric wires and points and buttons. But there was no main cable within several miles. He could not face the expense of laying a private wire. That was beyond him. After some years, an extension of cable was laid in the road in front of his garden. He had only a hundred feet to connect up, then the light and the heat of electricity was his. It was a trifling expense. Did he hesitate? [1]

Advancing and Abiding

2 John 9.—'Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God' (R.V.).

Dr Moffatt translates the verse, 'Any one who is "advanced" and will not remain by the doctrine of Christ, does not possess God.' The men the writer has in mind are those who considered themselves to be the 'advanced' men, the progressive thinkers. This verse is a warning addressed specially to them.

The Apostle quite obviously believes that it is possible at once to advance and to abide in the teaching. It is true that in this verse the emphasis is laid on the necessity of *abiding*. That was just because the 'advanced' thinkers of his day were getting so advanced that they were leaving Christ behind altogether. But no one must conclude from this that the Apostle was opposed to progress in Christian thought, that he wanted to fetter the inquiring mind. We couldn't be further from the truth than by picturing him as a kind of Fundamentalist of the first century. As a matter of simple fact and history, the first half century of the Christian Church was a time of immense development in Christian thought. It couldn't be otherwise. For they had to hammer out their own ideas about Jesus. They had to formulate their thought about Him in the light of the Cross and the Resurrection. In the light of those tremendous occurrences they knew that the ideas about Jesus which they had cherished while He was with them were not big enough, not Divine enough. They had to think out His relation to God. There is a big advance between Peter's account of Jesus in that sermon he preached on the first Pentecost and the account of Jesus he gives in his First Epistle.

And not only the question of Jesus' relation to God but also His relation to the world! It took a good deal to broaden out the thought of the first Christians from their idea of Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish nation to their glorious conviction that He was the Saviour of the world. And not only the relation of Jesus to the world,

[1] R. C. Gillie.

but His relation also to the philosophy of the time! It was St John who led the way in that matter. That wonderful Prologue to his Gospel in which he speaks of Jesus as the Word of God is simply John's effort to give an account of Jesus in terms of current philosophy.

All that the writer is doing is reminding his readers that, when men leave Christ behind and disregard His teaching—they are simply not Christian. No doubt he had the Gnostics in his mind, men who denied to Christ His place as sole Mediator between God and man, and whose teaching often led to flagrant and unblushing immorality. These men posed as the 'advanced' men of their day. He tells these 'advanced' men that if they had advanced so far as to deny Christ His rightful place and to repudiate His moral teaching, they were simply not of God.

There will always be progress in our understanding of Christ and our apprehension of Christian truth, but in all true progress there is an element of conservatism. We make our advances, but we keep in communication with our base. We start from the historic facts of our religion—from the fact of Christ—this Jesus who died and rose again. Starting from the fact of Christ we make our various advances, but all the while we 'hold fast the Head.' We advance, but we abide.

1. Perhaps there is need to remember this in the *theological thinking* of our day. As Dr Dale used to say, we are not at this time of day inventing a new religion. It is simply impertinent on our part to speak as if we were really the first to understand what Christianity is. Christianity has a great history behind it—a history of redeeming and saving power. The man who ignores the past history of the Christian Church is really quite incompetent to discuss Christianity at all. And a good many of our modern inadequate statements of the Christian faith are due to the fact that men do not realize that Christianity is a religion with a history, and that no account of it can be true which does not account for its past. Any re-statement of the Christian faith which, for example, reduces it to an ethical system, and Jesus to a kind of glorified teacher, is simply hopelessly inadequate. As the Apostles preached it, as St Paul preached it, as Luther preached it, as John Wesley preached it, Christianity was a religion of redemption and Jesus the mighty and saving Son of God. And such a redemptive religion it proved itself to be in the experience of men. If men ignore that fact, they are ignoring history and wandering far from the historic faith. The truth about Christianity is this—it changes and yet it remains the same. We have changed our modes of thought, we have expanded our ideas, but Christianity is still the good news that God was in Christ. And while we have to see to it that we are hospitable to new ideas, we have also to see to it that we keep our hold on that central faith. 'Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God.' It is a warning to which we in our passion for progress would do well to pay heed.

2. There is need to remember this so far as our *moral and ethical thinking* is concerned. We are great believers in progress in this age of ours. Of course, the fact of progress is unmistakable—though even in this matter we must beware of boasting overmuch. The progress has been mainly in material equipment and the understanding and therefore the mastery of Nature's powers. But it is doubtful whether man himself has advanced very much. Has the world ever produced a finer mind than Plato's? Has it ever produced a nobler spirit than Paul's? Has it ever produced a more gracious and beautiful personality than Francis?

But in knowledge and in material equipment, and in mastery of Nature's powers, there has been immeasurable advance. An American writer, comparing our modern civilization with the ancient civilization, says that while the latter was built on slavery modern civilization is built on machinery, and he estimates that every man, woman, and child in the United States has at command power approximately equal to that of one hundred slaves. In so far as machinery has displaced slave-labour it is all to the good. But this age of machinery has its own perils. There is the peril that the whole of life should become mechanized, that man should become the slave of the machine. But that is not the only peril. Machinery has enormously multiplied man's physical powers—but there has been no corresponding moral development. Man's mastery of physical powers has been turned to purposes of destruction.

¶ It is the advance of science which has made war increasingly terrible—far more so than it was twenty-five years ago. An eminent scientist,

Sir Richard Gregory, wrote a short time ago of 'the man of science': 'If he creates a Frankenstein monster, which becomes the terror of the human race, he may himself end in being shunned by civilized society.' He also said: 'The social reaction to the gifts of plenty made possible by the progress of scientific knowledge is not a corresponding increase of human welfare, but distress and unemployment and the prostitution of scientific effort to purposes of destruction.'

Progress is perilous unless while we make progress we abide in the teaching of Christ. Let men really abide in that teaching, let them honestly accept what Christ has to say about the relation of men to one another, about God as the Father of all, about love as the one law of life, and every new discovery, every fresh mastery, will make for the enrichment of life. But if our material progress is not to be our ultimate ruin, it is essential that we should not only advance but we should also abide.

But are we abiding? For here again is another mark of our times—men have been so intoxicated by their own powers that they think they can dispense with God. And dispensing with God, they think also they can dispense with His holy law. You know who the people are who are reckoned as 'advanced' in these days. The 'advanced' thinker is the man who flouts the moral law, who talks lightly of marriage, and scoffs at purity. We have moved, so the 'advanced' people say, far beyond the stage of society represented in the New Testament and to which Jesus spoke. The moral code which was suitable for society at that stage is no longer suitable for society at our more developed stage. So they proceed to invent a new morality of their own.

¶ A few years ago Bertrand and Dora Russell blew across this country like a high wind, arousing everywhere the publicity which sensationalism can always evoke. And this was their message, that marital fidelity is now an obsolete ideal, that husbands and wives should freely grant each other extra-marital *liaisons*, that jealousy about such *liaisons* is the sign of a narrow mind, that now at last the hour had struck for emancipation from such obscurantism, and that they, Bertrand and Dora Russell, were in their own relationships exhibiting their gospel's truth. So they talked and the repercussions of their influence were tremendous.[1]

One could say much by way of criticism of this new morality, as, for example, this: that history demonstrates in lurid fashion the truth that the degradation of marriage and the practice of self-indulgence is the sure and inevitable way to national dissolution and decay. But at the moment let us content ourselves with repeating this stern warning of the Apostle. 'Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God'; for Christ is simply the 'word' of God. To repudiate Christ is to repudiate God, and there is another solemn word to this effect: 'The nation and kingdom that will not serve me shall perish, yea that kingdom shall be utterly wasted.' If there is one appeal to which in the interests of our personal peace and our national well-being we ought to pay heed, it is this, 'Abide in the teaching of Christ.'

And let nobody imagine that 'abiding in the teaching' means stagnation. In this case 'abiding' is not the denial of 'advance,' it is the very condition of it. We advance by abiding. We shall never cease to advance if we abide in the teaching. For we have not left Christ behind—we are a long way yet from catching Him up. The individual who 'abides in the teaching' will never stagnate. He will never be able to settle down. The teaching will ever challenge him to scale new heights. To the very end of life the man who abides in the teaching will be growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

¶ Son of Man, whenever I doubt of life, I think of Thee. Nothing is so impossible as that Thou shouldest be dead. I can imagine the hills to dissolve in vapour and the stars to melt in smoke, and the rivers to empty themselves in sheer exhaustion; but I feel no limit in Thee. Thou never growest old to me. Last century is old, last year is an obsolete fashion, but Thou art not obsolete. Thou art abreast of all the centuries. I have never come up with Thee, modern as I am.[2]

[1] H. E. Fosdick.
[2] George Matheson.

The Desire to Dominate

3 John 9.—'Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence.'

In the orchestra of life the second violin is a very difficult instrument to play, and Diotrephes—one of the minor characters in the New Testament—never succeeded in playing it at all. He was in some other respects an imperfect member of the Early Church. He resented the authority of St John; he refused to receive his messengers. He attached himself to that party which believed, in opposition to St Paul, that if a Gentile desired to be a Christian he must first become a Jew. But these errors of judgment can be easily pardoned; they were common enough at the time. The radical defect in his Christian character was the desire for pre-eminence, the ambition to be first, the intention to dominate, if possible, every situation in which he played a part.

The number of men and women who are willing to offer the petition in the Moravian liturgy, 'From the unhappy desire of being great O Lord deliver us,' is not large. The passion for notoriety, the desire to dominate, are elements in human character which work untold harm. Their reflex action on the individual is often painful to witness, resulting as they do in arrogance, vanity, and pride. Their effect upon others is even more disastrous, and they are capable, as we have ourselves seen, of bringing civilization itself within measurable distance of ruin.

1. The desire for pre-eminence is so constant a feature in human nature that it finds frequent illustration in the pages of the New Testament and appears even in the lives of those who stood near to the great Master Himself. In the presence of the lowly Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, the disciples often discussed the question which of them was the greatest; and, on one occasion, James and John, foreseeing as they thought the day when Christ's kingdom of worldly power would be set up on earth, attempted to secure for themselves the two most eminent places, one on His right hand, the other on His left. This spirit has never altogether left the Church, and in every age there have been those who have marred the beauty of their own characters and disturbed the lives of other people by their inability to be content with any position but the first. There are, to be sure, to-day, as there always have been, people of the opposite type who are afflicted with a false and excessive modesty which prevents them from being even natural and hinders them from rendering effective service in the cause of Christ. But Diotrephes is still alive and active.

¶ 'What good work is there,' asks Bishop Gore, 'which is not in more or less continual danger of suffering or even of being abandoned, because fellow Christians, zealous fellow Christians, will plainly, and it must be said wilfully yield to the ambition to be first; will not be content to be second or third; will not do unobtrusive work; will think how can I shine? rather than how can I serve?'

In the life of the Christian Church there is a great deal of work to be done behind the scenes which can hardly ever be recognized publicly, and there are always some elect souls who are willing to undertake this work neither expecting nor desiring the praise of men; but there are others who are hurt if their efforts are not publicly praised, and who will only do the work that brings them into prominence so that they may be seen and heard of men.

And still worse there are churches which are afflicted with members who, by reason of their wealth or social influence, claim the right to dictate the policy of the Church and to dominate its activity. Here and there men possessed of such gifts, ascend naturally, by virtue of their beautiful Christian character, to the place of pre-eminence, occupying it with ease and to the great advantage of the congregation; but in other cases those who claim the pre-eminent place have not sufficient weight of Christian character to sustain the position into which they thrust themselves. They recall Bishop Blougram:

There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear.

2. In the world outside the Church the desire for domination is widespread and is the cause, direct or indirect, of much of the misery men are compelled to endure. The social ambition which afflicts not a few, especially those who

for the first time find themselves scrambling on the ledge of society, and the bitterness and resentment which they experience when others pass them by or outshine them in the splendour of social life, do not merit serious attention; but in the graver problems of industrial and international affairs, the desire for domination is rampant and works its ruinous will. The wars of history, with all the misery and suffering they have produced, have been largely due to the desire of one king or nation to dominate another king or nation. One main cause of the present war was the desire of Hitler to dominate Europe and ultimately to master the world. It is too dizzy a height for mortal man to climb, and it would seem as though from time to time God Himself intervenes to prevent such an ambition from being realized.

¶ 'Is it not a strange thing,' asks Professor Jacks in *The Lost Radiance*, 'that century after century the history of our civilization, in large affairs as in small, has turned on that forbidden question, who shall be greatest?—a question which assumes Protean forms, but which, in its newest forms as in its oldest, is utterly alien to the Christian conception of man, and has no place whatever in the religion of the spirit. Hence that hideous struggle for power that moves for ever in a vicious circle, now breaking out into terrific conflicts between nation and nation, now into class wars that are hardly less destructive, strewing calamity at every stage of its futile progress, until at last it brings the world to the verge of social and political anarchy.

The hope for men, for classes, and for nations lies in the acceptance of another point of view, of another theory of eminence. The evil spirit of domination can only be exorcised from human affairs, as men move out of themselves and take their stand by the side of Jesus Christ looking out upon life through His eyes. They will behold the revealer of the most High God in the form of a servant. They will see the chief among the sons of men in the act of stooping to minister to men in their need. They will hear Him say, 'I am among you as one that serveth,' and again, 'He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.' Within that sacred circle and under the influence of Christ's holy example another kind of emulation gradually begins to appear. Men strive to excel, not one another, but themselves; they desire pre-eminence, not in material power or in worldly splendour, but in the endless riches of Christian character.

¶ Jesus said that the greatest among you shall be the servant of all. Hitherto those were greatest who had the greatest number of servants, but now that man is greatest who serves the greatest number. Those who will not serve will be pushed to the wall. I went through thirteen empty palaces in Europe last year. Why were they empty? Those who had occupied them wanted to be served, they would not serve. So they broke themselves upon this law.[1]

Is it an idle dream that some day this view of life may fire the ambition of men, moving them everywhere to self-sacrifice and to service? Not altogether, for slowly this interpretation of life's meaning is gaining ground. When it obtains a wider acceptance and becomes general, there will be a new light in men's eyes and the lost radiance of life will be restored.

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 98.

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